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DEFENCE FROM THE MARGIN

Women Authors and Paratext between the Two Shores of the Adriatic
Three Case Studies from the Sixteenth Century

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For Charles University, Prague:

I declare that the following PhD thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned in the text and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

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In Porto, January 26, 2017

Jelena Bakić

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Abstract

This doctoral thesis, entitled *Defence from the Margin*, contributes to two fields considered marginal by previous scholarship, women's authorship during the early modern period and recent scholarship on the paratext, by introducing new knowledge about three women writers who wrote in Italian and lived on the two shores of the Adriatic in the second half of the sixteenth century. Moreover, this study provides the first comprehensive study of paratextual writing in defence of women by two women writers connected with the early modern city-state of Ragusa, positioning them in the literary, cultural and historical context of the early modern Italian environment.

The thesis is structured in four chapters: the first can be read both as an independent survey of the contexts in which the texts being analysed appeared, as well as an introduction to the next three chapters, each of which is based on one of three case studies: women authors and their texts, Maria Gondola (1584) and Speranza di Bona (1569) connected with the Ragusan environment, and Camilla Herculiana (1584), who lived in Padua. Apart from the fact that their work was written in Italian and appeared almost at the same historical moment, in a post-Tridentine context, and until recently remained forgotten, it is the voice of defence in relation to their female existence in the paratextual elements of their discursive secular prose that connects these three authors. Their discursive prose includes dedicatory epistles, dedicatory sonnets, *errata corrige*, trial testimony and letters.

Employing methodology that draws on close reading and translation of primary texts from Italian into English, and relying on paratextual theory mainly based in the works of Genette (1987) and Dunn (1994), as well as on theory which comes from the fields of micro-history and New Historicism, this thesis argues that the women authors

presented in this study wrote from the social margin and used the marginal part of the book as a way not only to enter the text and legitimize their authorship, but also to enter the debate of the *querelle des femmes*. Finally, by pointing out that the importance of these female-authored paratexts should be reconsidered, this thesis contributes to the historical recovery of early modern women`s work.

Abstrakt

Tato dizertační práce, nazvaná *Defence from the Margin (Obhajoba z okrajů)*, se věnuje dvěma oblastem dosud literární vědou zanedbávaným, a to ženskému psaní doby raného novověku a paratextovému materiálu literárních děl. Předkládá nové poznatky o třech spisovatelkách, které tvořily v italském jazyce a působily na dvou pobřežích Jaderského moře v 2. polovině 16. století. Tato práce také přináší první obsáhlejší studii paratextů dvou raně novověkých spisovatelek z městského státu Ragusa, které se zabývaly obhajobou žen, přičemž tyto autorky jsou vnímány v širším rámci literárního, kulturního a historického kontextu prostředí raně novověké Itálie.

Práce je rozdělena do čtyř kapitol: první lze chápat jako přehled kontextů, do kterých rozebírané texty vstupovaly, a zároveň jako úvod k dalším třem kapitolám zpracovávajícím případové studie věnované životu i dílu jednotlivých autorek, kterými jsou Maria Gondola (1584) a Speranza di Bona (1569), spojené s prostředím Ragusy, a Camilla Herculiana (1584), která žila v italské Padově. Kromě toho, že díla všech tří jsou napsána v italštině a objevila se téměř současně v kontextu post-tridentské éry, aby posléze až donedávna zůstala zapomenuta, spojuje tyto autorky zejména hlas obhajoby ozývající se v jejich ženské existenci v paratextových prvcích jejich diskurzivní sekulární prózy. Tento typ prózy zde představují dedikační epištoly a sonety, opravné listy, soudní výpovědi a dopisy.

Metodologicky práce vychází z techniky podrobného čtení a překladu původních textů z italštiny do angličtiny, přičemž aplikuje teorii paratextů založenou zejména na pracích Genetta (1987) a Dunna (1994) a teorie pocházející z oblasti mikrohistorie a nového historismu, a dochází k závěru, že uvedené spisovatelky nejen psaly z okraje společnosti a zároveň využívaly okrajové části svých publikací k uvedení následného

textu a obhajoby svého vlastního autorství, ale rovněž vstupovaly do debat v rámci *querelle des femmes*, tj. sporu o ženu. A konečně, zdůrazňováním nutnosti přehodnocení ženami psaných paratextů přispívá tato dizertace k historickému znovuobjevování ženské raně novověké tvorby.

Resumo

Esta tese, intitulada «Defence from the Margin», pretende contribuir para dois campos, entendidos como marginais por estudos anteriores, ao problematizar, simultaneamente, a questão da autoria feminina na Época Moderna e ao centrar-se na análise do «aparato textual», introduzindo novos conhecimentos sobre três mulheres que escreveram em italiano, nas margens do Adriático, na segunda metade do século XVI. Para além desta importante dimensão, este estudo fornece uma abordagem integrada de escritos paratextuais, em defesa das mulheres, da autoria de duas escritoras ligadas, de várias formas, à cidade de Ragusa, posicionando-as no contexto literário, histórico e cultural do «espaço» italiano, na segunda metade de Quinhentos. A tese organiza-se em quatro capítulos, podendo o primeiro ser lido simultaneamente como a apresentação do «estado da questão», que enquadra esta produção discursiva, mas também como uma introdução aos três capítulos seguintes, que analisam e problematizam cada um dos três «case studies»: mulheres escritoras e os seus textos - Maria Gondola (1584) e Speranza di Bona (1569), ligadas ao ambiente e espaço de Ragusa, e Camilla Herculiana (1584), que viveu em Pádua. Para além do facto do trabalho destas escritoras estar redigido em italiano e surgir quase no mesmo momento histórico, em contexto pós-tridentino, circunstância que, até agora, tem sido ignorada, a voz de defesa destas mulheres está decisivamente patente no envolvimento paratextual da sua produção discursiva.

Aplicando uma metodologia baseada num exercício de «close reading» e de tradução dos textos de italiano para inglês, cientificamente suportada principalmente pelos trabalhos de Genette (1987) e Dunn (1994), no âmbito de contribuições mais recentes, e também na bibliografia e metodologia proveniente dos campos da micro-história e do «New Historicism», esta tese procura provar que as autoras presentes neste

estudo escreveram a partir das margens e usaram as áreas marginais dos seus escritos, como espaços de legitimação dos respectivos textos e como estratégia para entrar na «*querelle des femmes*». Finalmente, a tese, salientando a importância destes paratextos de autoria feminina, almeja contribuir para a revalorização dos escritos de mulheres no dealbar da Época Moderna.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims to contribute to two fields considered marginal by previous scholarship, women's authorship during the early modern period and recent scholarship on the paratext, by introducing new knowledge about three women writers (Maria Gondola, Speranza di Bona, and Camilla Herculiana) who wrote in Italian and lived on the two shores of the Adriatic in the second half of the sixteenth century. The novelty of my research is at least fourfold: (a) this thesis, by paying special attention to paratextual analysis and the voice of defence within it, argues that these female-authored paratexts represent a previously unconsidered narrative within the *querelle des femmes*; (b) this is the first comprehensive study of the work of two women writers connected with Ragusan society in the context of the Italian literary tradition,¹ and of the socially constructed gender roles within both Ragusan and Italian cultural traditions; (c) by introducing the third case study I believe that light will be shed on several unknown or previously unexplored parts of the work of the other two, especially in the domain of female authorship; and finally (d) this work contains the first translation into English of the only extant text by Maria Gondola, thus making it available for the first time to the broader English-speaking public and scholarly community.

More generally, this dissertation explores the paratextual strategies used by women writers to defend themselves and their families' pride and honour, in Italy and Ragusa during the sixteenth century. These women authors, in their writings of self-

¹ In September 2015, at the beginning of the third year of my PhD research, I was advised by Dr Maria Francesca Gabrielli that a book entitled *Renaissance Women's Writing between the Two Adriatic Shores*, ed. and intro. Francesca Maria Gabrielli, trans. Shannon McHugh, Melissa Swain, and Francesca Maria Gabrielli, will appear in the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series*. This book will include work by three women from Ragusa: the transcription of the dedicatory epistle by Maria Gondola in Italian and its translation in English, and Giulia di Bona and Speranza di Bona's work. I am more than grateful to Dr Gabrielli for this information and for sharing her work published on Speranza di Bona with me. Although the publication of this book was expected in February last year (2016), the editor informed me that the book will come out in late 2017 or early 2018.

defence, paradoxically rely on the androcentric literary codes which were at the same time used against them. These codes (because they were the only ones available to them at the time) were appropriated and consequently strategically used by women, within socially and culturally prescribed gender roles. I focus on these paradoxes, explained in the first chapter, in order to understand how the female position, as well as the representations of and the discourses on female nature, were changing within the androcentric cultural environment. I also explore how the usage of ideas and authorities which were previously (or in some cases were still at the time) used as a basis for misogyny became, in some male and female writings, proof of female equality and even superiority. These contradictions provided women with the tools to express their own ideas within the general discourse of the time, which was rooted mainly in Aristotelian philosophy, Christian doctrine, Roman law, and in the literary traditions of Neoplatonism and Petrarchism. Paratexts, and especially dedicatory epistles signed by women, proved to be one of the rare spaces where women writers could transgress the imposed norms, and through the act of defending their honour, or the honour of their friends or family members, they strategically used this marginal space in the book to justify their own right to authorship. This act, of course, had certain consequences, and it was not rarely that women were blamed for transgression of social expectations, and their chastity was questioned. In the words of British scholar Marion Wynne-Davies:

the act of writing was clearly an impingement upon ‘silence’, since the written word was a material validation of female articulacy, but to go further and publish their works also laid women open to charges of immoral behaviour in that, by allowing all men to see/hear their words, they came to be regarded as unchaste.²

² Marion Wynne-Davies, ed., *Women Poets of the Renaissance*, London, J.M. Dent, 1999, xxvi.

i. The margin

The word ‘margin’ from the title of this thesis has at least a threefold meaning. As will be seen, it refers to the marginal position of women writers in society during the sixteenth century, the geographical margins, and the marginal position of the paratexts within the book, until recently neglected by scholarship. Women’s place in literature and in the book industry, their contribution to culture in general, as well as their role in society, have all been neglected for centuries, and placed at the margin of the canon. In the words of Natalie Zemon Davis women were “removed from the centres of political power, royal, civic, and senatorial” and their writings “were created from a marginal place [...] it was a borderland between cultural deposits that allowed new growth and surprising hybrids”.³ Social and cultural historians, drawing from printed and documentary sources, have rewritten and reconsidered the place of women within early modern culture, contradicting the idealized picture of women’s equality with men, offered by the Swiss cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt in his seminal work *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.⁴ Consequently, late twentieth-century studies informed by feminist scholarship and recovery work, have investigated women writers of the early modern period within the context of rarity and exceptionality. This tendency started with the influential study by Joan Kelly⁵ and her negative answer to the question “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” Only recently has the idea of the marginalisation and vast female exclusion from cultural production been partially abandoned, and been replaced by the suggestion that female work was in fact visible and that the period of the Counter-Reformation was in many ways supportive of women’s writings, though those

³ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margin: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*, Cambridge, MA, London, Harvard University Press, 1997 [1995], 209-210. The title of this thesis, as well as the methodological choice of three case studies, is inspired by Zemon Davis’ book.

⁴ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Oxford, Phaidon, [1860] 1981.

⁵ Joan Kelly, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?”, *Women, History, and Theory*, ed. Joan Kelly, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984, pp. 175-201.

writings tended to be subsequently marginalized by later criticism.⁶ During the past ten years, the focus of scholarship has moved to women as producers of culture within certain groups, which include the academies, correspondence networks, as well as patronage networks, and to the emergence of the *virtuosa*, the secular woman who was writer, artist, actress or composer, an identity which from the sixteenth century it was possible to find also in some women of lower social classes. However, the position of women was multiply marginalised in various fields, such as education, any decision making, or the range of professional possibilities. In that sense, when representing the three women authors in this study, I will try to re-think and revise their marginal position within society, their marginalisation by later literary criticism, and to focus on their position as significant contributors to the production of culture.

The second margin is textual: the space “between its extreme edge and the main body of written or printed matter”,⁷ in other words, the paratext. Until recently, literary criticism attributed paratexts merely marginal status. During the early modern period, however, the part of the book that we now call paratext was seen differently; dedicatory epistles especially were deemed to be of high importance.⁸ The historical and theoretical significance of the paratext should be highlighted, and in the case of women’s writings its ‘strategic function’ proved to be underestimated, as the paratext is “not only the text, but also the space”.⁹ Julie A. Eckerle in her chapter entitled “Prefacing Texts,

⁶ For more information on this topic, see: Virginia Cox, *Women’s Writing in Italy, 1400-1650*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. See also: Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011; Natalie Zemon Davis, “Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France”, *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery, with Arnold I. Davidson, Ann Swidler, and Ian Watt, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1986, 53-63, 332-335, here 63.

⁷ “margin, n.”, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2016. Accessed 3 December 2016.

⁸ Kevin Dunn, *Pretexs of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1994.

⁹ Philip Bossier and Rolien Scheffer, eds, *Soglie testuali: Funzioni del paratesto nel secondo Cinquecento e oltre [Textual Thresholds: Functions of Paratexts in the Late Sixteenth Century and Beyond]*, Rome, Vecchiarelli Editore, 2010, 16. In the original: “Il paratesto non è solo testo, ma anche

Authorizing Authors, and Constructing Selves: The Preface as Autobiographical Space”¹⁰ points out that for women, who already wrote from the social margins, the marginal space of the book represented one of the strategic ways via which they could enter the text. The dedicatory epistle was used as a strategy to express ideas which could not be formulated either in the main text of the book, or in some other form. According to Maria Antonietta Terzoli, analysis of the strategies and praxis of writing dedicatory epistles, which stand in between the public and the private, gives us more insight into understanding the role of the writer in different times and different cultures, but it also provides us with tools to explore the complex relationship between parts of the book.¹¹

In this context, the sixteenth century becomes important for such an analysis, being the transitional century from the manuscript to the printed book, when the dedicatory epistle by its form is closer to the letter than to the dedication of the book as we know it today. From the sixteenth century until the eighteenth century the ‘epistolarity’ of the dedication was one of its main patterns,¹² and all the dedicatory texts presented here are analysed within the epistolary context, which made the dedicatory epistles a metaphorical bridge between private life and published text, thus easing the woman writer’s transition from one world to the next.

The discourse within the epistolary genre is marked by the rhetoric of truth and veracity, or in Genette’s words by the rhetoric of “taking credit for truthfulness or

spazio: come elemento spaziale fa parte dell’architettura di un libro, e quindi costituisce un segno fisico della produzione libraria.”

¹⁰ Julie A. Eckerle, “Prefacing Texts, Authorizing Authors, and Constructing Selves: The Preface as Autobiographical Space”, *Genre and Women’s Life Writing in Early Modern England*, eds Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, 110

¹¹ Maria A. Terzoli, “I margini dell’opera nei libri di poesia: Strategie e convenzioni dedicatorie nel Petrarchismo italiano”, *Neohelicon*, 37, 2010, 157. Available at: www.margini.unibas.ch. In the original: “chi consideri strategie e funzioni della prassi dedicatoria, appare in effetti più agevole comprendere il ruolo dello scrittore in tempi e culture diverse, ma anche studiare la complessa, e talora sofisticata interazione che si stabilisce tra le parti di un’opera.”

¹² Terzoli, 176.

sincerity”,¹³ and as such it was mainly taken by previous scholarship as testimony of how things in fact happened. However, close analysis of texts covered by this study proves that dedicatory epistles in both prose and verse were the products of certain standards and codes¹⁴ inscribed in culture, and contained important testimonies about social and cultural relationships, but their historicity should be questioned. However, writing about the preface in general, Eckerle notes:

precisely *because* it is marginalized, the space of the preface becomes an acceptable place for those typically denied a voice to say those things that have no place in the privileged text. The preface allows for that which is typically not allowed, including the published voices of unsanctioned writers and, in turn, more possibilities for innovation and even personal commentary than such writers would be allowed in a primary text.¹⁵

The third margin refers to “the ground immediately adjacent to [...] a shore”,¹⁶ as the research is positioned between two shores of the Adriatic. Italy in the form we know it today did not exist in the sixteenth century, nor did Ragusa. The Adriatic Sea remained the same. For centuries, the Adriatic Sea connected its eastern shore with the culture of Italy and the rest of Europe. The political, cultural, and trade connections between the two shores were tight and complex, reinforced by the fact that most of the towns on the eastern shore had been a part of the Republic of Venice.¹⁷ Women writers covered by this thesis lived in or were connected with cities on the Adriatic coastline: the independent city-state Ragusa on the eastern shore of the Adriatic, Manfredonia

¹³ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997 [1987], 206.

¹⁴ See Dunja Fališevac, “Renesansna poslanica kao prostor poetičko-estetičkih iskaza”, *Colloquia Maruliana*, Split, Knjizevni krug Split, XVII, 2008, 7-25.

¹⁵ Eckerle, 100.

¹⁶ “margin, n.”, *OED Online*.

¹⁷ See Chapter 1.

(Siponto) in southern Italy (at the time part of the Kingdom of Naples), and Venetian-ruled Padua in the north. Camilla Herculiana, meanwhile, lived in Padua, and although it has been suggested that she might have had a direct connection with Ragusan students in Padua, at this stage only her connections with Polish culture can be proved. But what definitely connects Camilla Herculiana with Speranza di Bona and Maria Gondola is the paratextual rhetoric of self-defence and defence of women's rights.

The Adriatic Sea connects those shores, and as a metaphorical bridge it also connects two cultures. "The Venetian gulf" as it was usually called in the early modern period, in Braudel's words was "a unity that was as much cultural and economic as it was political, and whose predominant flavour was Italian. The gulf was Venetian, of course, but in the sixteenth century it was more than this, it was the sphere of a triumphant Italian culture".¹⁸ The culture in Ragusa had its own particularities; in the words of Dunja Fališevac, it represented at the same time an open and a closed city. Open in terms of accepting the dominant cultural trends from the west, and closed because of its relatively repressive and conservative ideology. However, Fališevac states that Ragusa could be seen as the space of the reception, reproduction and synthesis of almost all the poetical and aesthetic praxis from the culture of western Europe.¹⁹

ii The defence

The defence of women's rights was common practice in writing by women and men in the sixteenth century, and it was known by the name *querelle des femmes*. It was a debate between those who reviled women and those who defended them. In their writings they provided answers on different questions regarding female virtue and

¹⁸ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. 1, London, Collins, 1972, 131 [English translation of the French edition from 1966].

¹⁹ Dunja Fališevac, *Dubrovnik – otvoreni i zatvoreni grad. Studije o dubrovačkoj književnoj kulturi*, Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2007, 12.

capacity. For example, the question of responsibility for Adam's Fall, the virtuousness and immortality of the soul, the role within society and women's position within it, are all topics discussed within this debate. For the purpose of making known to "all the world" their version of the "story", women took the pen in their hands and wrote against their detractors, from Christine de Pizan onwards. They tried to defend their own positions and the positions of their families and friends. At the same time, and even before, there were also men who did the same in the form of dialogues, treatises, or poems. Analysing the concept of the defence in the context of the early modern English novel, Donovan argues that major histories of the novel do not recognize the importance of the "women's defence-narrative in its formation [...] the women's defence-narrative has not heretofore been identified as such, nor studied as a discrete subgenre of early modern women's literature".²⁰ In the sixteenth century, conduct literature in Italian prescribing behavioural rules and norms, as well as entire works of defence by both men and women, appeared in significant numbers,²¹ but so far only entire works have been taken into consideration by the scholarship, such as those by Lucrezia Marinella or Moderata Fonte. Meanwhile, the paratext and the dedicatory epistles have largely been neglected.

This thesis is based on analysis of three case studies of women writing in Italian, looked at in their historical, cultural and literary contexts, as well as in their trans-cultural context, and from the perspective of inter-cultural connections. The first concerns Maria Gondola, a woman who lived in Ragusa, on the eastern shore of the

²⁰ See Josephine Donovan, "That All the World May Know: Women's 'Defence-Narratives' and the Early Novel", Dowd and Eckerle, eds, 172.

²¹ See Chapter 1 and also Axel Erdmann's important bibliographical collection, *My Gracious Silence: Women in the Mirror of 16th Century Printing in Western Europe*, Luzern, Gilhofer & Ranschburg, 1999. The book is divided into two parts, "The Mirror" where he provides bibliographical data on books on the ideas of womanhood and those addressed to women. The second part, entitled "Triumph Over Silence", contains references to the texts written, or in any other way authored by women.

Adriatic, and her only signed text, the dedicatory epistle to a book written by her husband Nicolò Vito di Gozze, *Discorsi [...] sopra le Metheore d'Aristotele* (1584).²² This book had two editions, the second one appearing a year later in 1585, with a revised dedicatory text, one and a half pages shorter. Written in defence of the honour of her friend, female poet Fiore Zuzzori, Gondola discusses female spirit and mind, the female nature and intellect, and also criticizes the false morality of the city of Ragusa. The second case study examines a woman writer from Padua, Camilla Herculiana (Erculiana/i), who, in the same year as the first edition of Gondola's text appeared, published an epistolary book on natural philosophy, *Lettere di philosophia naturale, di Camilla Herculiana, speciala alle tre stelle in Padoua, indirizzate alla serenissima Regina di Polonia: nella quale si tratta la natural causa delli diluuij, et il natural temperamento dell'huomo, et la natural formatione dell'arco celeste*.²³ The book was published in Kraków, and apart from three letters written by Herculiana, and one letter in answer by one of the addressees, there is an important paratext which should be analysed in detail and in the context of the *querelle des femmes*. Two still-unpublished letters by Venetian humanist Sebastiano Erizzo addressed to Camilla Herculiana are included in this study, and their importance in the context of the sixteenth-century debate on women is emphasised. The book signed by Herculiana opens with the dedicatory epistle, which has a similar structure to Gondola's, written in defence of women. There is also a preface to the reader and a poem in Latin which I analyse in line with Genette's and Dunn's theory, as well as recent theory on the importance of

²² Nicolò Vito di Gozze, *Discorsi di M. Nicolò Vito di Gozze, gentil'huomo ragugeo, Dell'Academia degli occulti, sopra le Metheore d'Aristotele, Ridotti in dialogo & divisi in quattro giornate*, Venice, Apresso Francesco Ziletti, 1584, 1585. I refer and quote the first edition of this book (1584) and when referencing to the title I will use *Discorsi*.

²³ Camilla Herculana, *Lettere di philosophia naturale*, Cracow, Officina di Lazzaro, 1584.

Renaissance paratext.²⁴ Herculiana was accused of heretical ideas, and questioned by the Inquisition in Padua, so the textual account of her defence is included in this study. The third woman author is Speranza di Bona, who was originally from the eastern shore of the Adriatic, mostly probably from Ragusa, but who lived probably for most of her life in Manfredonia, in the southern Italian peninsula. She published and contributed to only one book: *Difesa de le rime et prose de la signora Speranza, et Vittoria di Bona in difesa di suo honore, et contra quelli, che ricerco farli infamia con sue rime*,²⁵ without date and place of publication, though the twenty-two-page dedicatory epistle is dated 1569. This book has 71 folios, which includes the dedicatory epistle, “116 sonnets, 5 madrigals, 4 poetical cycles in octaves, and one exchange poem in octaves, two caudate sonnets, and one isolated stanza of the canzone”.²⁶ Within this book, Speranza di Bona wrote 25 sonnets, three madrigals, and one caudate sonnet. Some of the other poems are written by her sister Giulia di Bona, and the rest consist of answers from other poets to her verses. In the long dedicatory epistle she attempts to defend the honour of her family (though mainly that of her sisters and herself). Apart from this, there is the letter by Speranza di Bona to Gioanbattista Pagano,²⁷ and two letters from Giantomaso lupoda Bagnuolo,²⁸ and at the end of the book there is an important though unsigned text and list of *errata corrige*, which, as I will try to show, was written by the author.

What connects the three women presented in this work, apart from their having the same influence and therefore using similar rhetorical strategies, their language (Italian), their historical moment (the second half of the sixteenth century, the post-

²⁴ An especially useful book is *Renaissance Paratext*, eds Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, [2011] 2014.

²⁵ Speranza di Bona, *Difesa de le rime et prose de la signora Speranza, et Vittoria di Bona in difesa di suo honore, et contra quelli, che ricerco farli infamia con sue rime*, [s.l.n.]. Further references to this title will use *Difesa*.

²⁶ Maria Francesca Gabrielli, “Sestra sestri: bilješke o kanconijeru Nade Bunić (Speranze di Bona)”, *Grada za povijest književnosti hrvatske*, Knjiga 38, Zagreb, HAZU, 2015, 94.

²⁷ Di Bona, 62v-63r.

²⁸ Di Bona, 63r-64r.

Tridentine context), the fact that they belonged to the middle class and partly to “the intellectual family”,²⁹ is the fact that they used the dedications of the books as spaces to protest against certain social norms connected with their own female existence (especially in the case of Speranza di Bona), as well as space to speak about women’s position in general. All of them, in line with traditional dedicatory rhetoric, defended their own right to be published and finally to become authors. In this context, the fact that they all wrote in the sixteenth century becomes important. The status of the author within the paratext, when almost all rights were in the hands of editors and typographers, becomes polyvalent, and stands in a direct relationship with the reader. In that line, the early modern paradigm of the *imitatio*, self-promotional strategies, and metaliterature will be covered within this thesis.

The censorship experienced in all three cases is also analysed, and connected to their voices of defence and to the historical and cultural moment. One part of my thesis, therefore, focuses on the autobiographical elements in the dedicatory epistles and their self-narration, their reception, and a reconstruction of their lives based on these texts. For example, the dedicatory epistle signed by Gondola is one of the main texts based on which the life of the dedicatee Fiore Zuzzori has been pieced together. In the other part, I believe that it is necessary to see how these texts move from the typical rhetoric of the dedicatory genre towards the rhetoric of the *querelle des femmes*. These three women, in their attempts to defend honour, at the same time managed the common resource of honour within their society, using the dedicatory epistle, as will be shown, as one more claim for dignity and authority. This kind of analysis will shed light on some parts of

²⁹ I borrow the notion from Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2009, 2. According to the author “the intellectual family”, based on the learned fathers, provided women authors with the necessary framework to publish their work. Moreover, she states that “by publishing their works within the safety of family networks and deploying familial metaphor when approaching male patrons, women themselves used ‘the intellectual family’ as a rhetorical device for making their novel status as scholars and authors appealing to contemporary culture.”

their lives upon which until the present moment it was only possible to speculate, and provide information about the nature of women's social relationships, cultural and social context, as well as their power relations and patronage.

To sum up, this thesis argues that: (a) the dedicatory epistles signed by women authors, along with all the paratext, represent a neglected and under-explored source for the reconstruction of the female role in the production of culture and their contribution to the *querelle des femmes*; (b) the position of the dedicatory epistles at the very beginning of the book provided the ideal space for female self-affirmation; (c) close analysis of these dedicatory epistles uncovers an important aspect of patronage relationships, and also contributes to recent work on resources and the economy of social relationships.

iii Relevance of the research

'Pro-women' texts written by women in the sixteenth century should be looked at within the context of the already vast literature on women's writings in self-defence in the early modern period. In scholarship on the defence of female rights and the *querelle des femmes*, until now only authors' complete work has been taken into consideration, such as Lucrezia Marinella's and Moderata's work,³⁰ as stated above, as well as the large amount of treatises and conduct literature written by men in the context of Italian literature, while the dedicatory epistles as well as other paratextual elements have been largely neglected.

By presenting the life and work of these secular, learned women authors, I argue for their importance and the importance of their work for the later birth of feminism. During their lifetimes, although their literary and intellectual achievements were high,

³⁰ See below.

their impact on the general position of women writers, or simply on the questioning of certain norms, cannot be proved. However, the importance of these writings and examples needs to be highlighted today, to understand the set of rules imposed on a micro-historical level which consequently became the norm on the macro level, and unfortunately lasted for a very long time. Spanish philologist Mercedes Arriaga Flórez suggests that it is impossible to identify those women writers as historical subjects / persons if the texts written by them, read by us, do not become ‘the heritage’ which belongs to everyone. By analysing these texts, we can reconstruct history, and probably form and suggest new politics.³¹ However, the labelling of women from the sixteenth century as feminist (such as in the work of Constance Jordan who moreover suggested the term: “renaissance feminism”³²), in my opinion, should be avoided as anachronistic. Their work was – and is – important, as these women found ways to make their voices heard as contributors to the culture, even from the marginal spaces from which they had to act.

On the topic of the early modern period and women’s position within it in Ragusa and Dalmatia, some important work has already been done.³³ The most important study until now on women writers in Ragusa is *Pjesnikinje starog Dubrovnika*, by Zdenka Marković,³⁴ which was the first comprehensive study of women writers from Ragusa, and has unfortunately largely been neglected by later critique. When the Italian influence is taken into consideration, I should mention Josip Torbarina’s dated but still very important study published in English, *Italian Influence*

³¹ Mercedes Arriaga Flórez, “Teorías feministas ante litteram: las mujeres que escriben tratados en los siglos XV e XVI en Italia”, Academia.edu; www.academia.edu/26945379/Teor%C3%ADas_feministas_ante_litteram. Accessed 21 December 2016.

³² Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990.

³³ As listed below. See parts on reception in every chapter.

³⁴ Zdenka Marković, *Pjesnikinje Starog Dubrovnika, od sredine XVI do svršetka XVIII stoljeća u kulturnoj sredini svoga vremena*, Zagreb, JAZU, Odjel za Suvremenu Književnost, 1970.

on the Poets of the Ragusan Republic (1931).³⁵ Although it only mentions women writers Fiore Zuzzori and Giulia di Bona as muses and inspiration for male writings, it is the most detailed analysis of Italian literary influences on the writing mode in Ragusa. Dunja Fališevac³⁶ gives insights on the cultural space of the Republic of Ragusa in the early modern period. She considers Ragusa an open and closed city. Open when the cultural and literary influence of western Europe is taken into consideration. On the other side, taking into consideration the strict political government, conservatism, and the repressive ideology of the elite, the city of Ragusa remained closed to more liberal cultural and literary tendencies.³⁷ The recent work by three women scholars Zdenka Janeković-Römer,³⁸ Eleonora Carinci,³⁹ and Maria Francesca Gabrielli⁴⁰ has been the most important and the most inspiring research on the three women authors I am addressing here. The first comprehensive study of the work and life of Speranza di Bona was by Gabrielli (2015), and in 2013 Eleonora Carinci wrote an extensive analysis of Camilla Herculiana, which was later used by Meredith K. Ray in *Daughters of Alchemy* (2015).⁴¹ The vast literature produced in Italy has of course also been consulted and used, amongst which is Marina Zancan's *Nel cerchio della luna. Figure di donna in*

³⁵ Josip Torbarina, *Italian Influence on the Poets of the Ragusan Republic*, London, Williams & Norgate, 1931.

³⁶ Fališevac, 2007.

³⁷ Fališevac, 2007, 5.

³⁸ Zdenka Janeković-Römer, "Marija Gondola Gozze: La querelle des femmes u renesansnom Dubrovniku", *Žene u Hrvatskoj: Ženska i kulturna povijest*, ed. Andrea Feldman, Zagreb, Ženska infoteka, 2004, 105-123.

³⁹ Eleonora Carinci, "Una speziala padovana: Lettere di philosophia naturale di Camilla Erculiani" (1584)", *The Society for Italian studies*, Manchester, 2013. Available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1179/0075163413Z.00000000040.

⁴⁰ Gabrielli, 2015.

⁴¹ Meredith Kennedy Ray, *Daughters of Alchemy*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2015. As already noted, an edition which will include the work of Maria Gondola, Speranza, and Giulia di Bona is expected to appear in 2017. Moreover, an edition of Herculiana's work is in preparation, too, also in *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe. The Toronto Series*, entitled Camilla Erculiani, *Letters on Natural Philosophy* (ed. and trans. Eleonora Carinci and Hannah Marcus), and it should appear in 2017. In this context, I hope that my work will contribute to the recent research on these three women writers.

alcuni testi del XVI secolo,⁴² Gabriella Zarri's *Per lettera. La scrittura epistolare femminile tra archivio e tipografia. Secoli XVI-XVII*,⁴³ and the important work by Maria Antonietta Terzoli which is a part of the project on dedications in the Italian literary tradition,⁴⁴ to mention just the most important ones. In the work by Virginia Cox and Natalie Zemon Davis I have found the most detailed and the most inspiring methodology for the development of my thesis, specifically Cox's book *Women's Writing in Italy 1400-1650* (2008), particularly her comparative analysis of women's cultural production, and the positioning of women writers in larger contexts, and Davis's *Women on the Margins. Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (1995), from whom I borrowed idea of basing my dissertation on three case studies, taking into consideration the importance of the concept of gender and margin.

iv Relational methodology

The premise of this thesis is that dedicatory epistles signed by women, together with other paratextual elements in the sixteenth-century Italian and Ragusan context, can shed important light on the neglected relations suggested by micro-history. These paratexts are understood, following Genette's definition, as a combination of those liminal devices that it is possible to find within the book, like titles, dedicatory epistles, or dedications to the reader, which he calls 'peritext' and the 'epitext', and which he defines as "all those messages that, at least originally, are located outside of the book [...] or under cover of private communication."⁴⁵ In conducting the three case studies,

⁴² Marina Zancan, *Nel cerchio della luna. Figure di donna in alcuni testi del XVI secolo*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1983.

⁴³ Gabriella Zarri, ed., *Per lettera: la scrittura epistolare femminile tra archivio e tipografia. Secoli XV-XVII*, Roma, Viella, 1999.

⁴⁴ It is possible to find highly useful articles on studies of dedicatory epistles within the Italian tradition in the journal *Margini. Giornale della dedica e altro*. See: www.margini.unibas.ch/web/it/index.html. Accessed 21st December 2016.

⁴⁵ Genette, 5. He offers the formula, paratext = peritext + epitext.

avoiding any kind of generalization, I suggest the importance of analysing these female authors' work in the context of Italian literary culture, together with both female and male writers. In doing this I found useful the ideas of Ann Rosalind Jones.⁴⁶ In analysing early modern love lyrics written by women, she suggests that women through their writing transgressed gender rules, via "the strategic adoption of a prestigious discourse that legitimates their writing",⁴⁷ stating:

Women poets were able to write and to publish because they drew upon certain potentially productive contradictions in early modern culture [...] Ideological pressures worked against their entry into the public world of print: female silence was equated with chastity, female eloquence with promiscuity. Yet at the same time humanist culture celebrated eloquence in general as a distinguishing skill of male scholars, politicians, courtiers and poets. A second contradiction was that the history of the love lyric provided only male models to women poets.⁴⁸

I believe that the same codes and patterns can be traced in the paratexts authored by the three women covered in this dissertation, which should be analysed alongside the paratextual conventions of the time. For example, in the early modern period it was common that the dedicatory epistles were printed separately and added to the book later, as suggested by Helen Smith and Louise Wilson: "This physical and temporal separation allows many early modern paratexts to be highly self-reflexive, commenting on the quality of printing contained in the book they accompany, or in the processes and accidents of production."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540 -1620*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1990. For this dissertation, the introduction is the most interesting, as it tackles the concepts of "Imitation, Negotiation, Appropriation".

⁴⁷ Jones, 4.

⁴⁸ Jones, 1.

⁴⁹ Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, "Introduction", Smith and Wilson, eds, 2014, 3.

The primary texts covered by my dissertation are termed “secular discursive prose writings by women”,⁵⁰ popular among women writers in the last decades of sixteenth century. Cox broadly describes the prose, which includes “treatises, dialogues, ‘meditations’, volumes of letters, and polemical tracts”, as discursive prose, a term I borrow in this thesis. Although she does not provide a definition of the term ‘discursive’ I understand it in line with the definitions provided by cultural historians, where discourse represents a “grouping of utterances or sentences, statements which are enacted within a social context, which are determined by that social context and which contribute to the way that social context continues its existence.”⁵¹ Within discourse there is no difference between the literary and non-literary text, and the relationship with power, which is strictly connected with knowledge, can also be read in these texts. Writing about discursive prose, Cox adds:

Other secular discursive prose works by women in this period taking the form of letters include Camilla Erculiani’s *Lettere di philosophia naturale* (1584), the earliest sustained published exercise in natural-philosophical writing by an Italian woman if we except Isabella Cortese’s perhaps apocryphal *Secreti* (1561) and the Dalmatian Maria Gondola’s brief letter-treatise arguing for the dignity of the female sex, published with the *Discorsi sopra le metheore d’Aristotile* of her husband, Niccolò Vito di Gozze, in 1585.⁵²

To Cox’s list, I would add the long dedicatory epistle by Speranza di Bona, along with the *errata corrige* and the three letters which appeared in her book. The epistolary genre connects the three authors and their work. The concept of truth on which authors usually insist can be found in the constant dialogue between reality and fiction produced by

⁵⁰ Cox, 2011, 213-252.

⁵¹ Sara Mills, *Discourse*, London, Routledge, 1997, 11.

⁵² Cox, 2011, 215-216.

cultural patterns, but also sustaining already-existing cultural rules. In this context, “self-affirmation” takes a particular form, as well as metatext and auto-reflection about their main work. The epistolary genre becomes important, as:

the letter is, after all, much more of a witness to *interactions* and *relations*, and even over a long period, it is not directly the medium of self-reflection [...] In this sense, however, we could speak of a particular form of ‘self-affirmation’, the affirmation of the individual anchoring him-or herself within aristocratic relationship networks and securing a place on the scale of prestige.⁵³

It is in the letters and in the dedicatory epistles that the connection between the private and the public, as well as the literal and the non-literal, marked by strong authorial self-promotion, is more visible than in the other genres. The dialogic character of the letter also becomes important (just to mention Poliziano’s famous definition where the closeness of the dialogue to letters is emphasised, “*epistula velut altera pars dialogi*”⁵⁴), and it will be obvious in Herculiana’s writing. As the early modern period was strongly influenced by antiquity, so was the letter writing of the time. According to Paul Oskar Kristeller the Renaissance *ars epistolandi* is directly influenced by the medieval *ars dictandi*.⁵⁵ Following the *ars dictandi*, the five parts of letter composition (*salutatio*, *exordium*, *narratio*, *petitio*, *conclusio*, “the salutation, the securing of goodwill, the narration, the petition, and the conclusion”⁵⁶), are taken into consideration

⁵³ Sophie Ruppel, “Family Politics, Family Networks and the ‘Familial Self’. Silbing letters in Seventeenth Century German High Aristocracy”, *Mapping the ‘I’: Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland*, ed. Claudia Ulbrich, Leiden [etc.], Brill, 2015, 252.

⁵⁴ Maria Luisa Doglio, *Lettera e donna. Scrittura epistolare al femminile tra Quattro e Cinquecento*, Roma, Bulzoni Editore, 1993, 3: In translation: “a letter is like one part of dialogue”.

⁵⁵ Paul O. Kristeller, “Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture”, *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. James J. Murphy, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983, 1-19.

⁵⁶ From the anonymous *Rationes dictandi* or *The Principles of Letter Writing* (c.1135), mentioned in Patricia Bizzel and Bruce Herzberg, eds, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, Boston, Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1990, 431.

in the analysis of all the dedicatory epistles, as well as the epistles by Herculiana and Di Bona.

The dedicatory epistle, as well as the epistle in general, as a literary genre, is marked by two characteristics: narration about self and the expression of opinion (because of its dialogic structure).⁵⁷ Or, in Zarri's words, the social bond and subjectivity became connected through the epistolary genre⁵⁸ as well as "the explicit metaliterary intervention".⁵⁹ In this context, this thesis suggests that dedicatory epistles and letters should be analysed together in the context of their social function, which is that of female personal defence and defence of women in general. We can read from these texts social, power, and gender relations, along with personal, individual, and self relationships, and they provide valuable insight into the conditions and environment these authors lived in. For example, we can read reminiscences about different family relations, as in the case of Di Bona, who explained the relationship between herself and her sisters, parents, and servant. The different self-authorizing strategies applied by the authors, from the use of many male figures as proof of the quality of her work (Gondola), the addressing of an influential woman figure (Gondola, Herculiana), or even self-abasement (Di Bona), become highly important for understanding female writing production in the early modern period.

In considering self-narratives, a useful view can be found in Montaigne, who expressed early but very modern ideas about the impossibility of equating the subject who writes with the person about whom is being written. In his *Essays* Montaigne writes: "Others form man; I tell of him, and portray a particular one, very ill-formed, whom I should really make very different from what he is if I had to fashion him over

⁵⁷ See Fališevac, 2008, 7-25.

⁵⁸ Zarri, 1999, xii.

⁵⁹ Bossier and Scheffer, eds, 12. In the original: "espilicito intervento metaletterario."

again. But now it is done.”⁶⁰ According to Montaigne stability does not exist, “the autobiographical ‘I’ is constantly divided in its search for a past self which is ever in flight”,⁶¹ the subject of the author who writes cannot be the same as the subject of the author who is written about: “My history needs to be adapted to the moment. I may presently change, not only by chance, but also by intention [...] whether I am different myself, or whether I take hold of my subjects in different circumstances and aspects”.⁶² In this context, the question “Do people construct themselves according to ideal-typical models (and hence tell us something about the values of their era), or do they imagine their lives as the counterpoints to the existing orders?”⁶³ becomes important, and will be addressed in the first chapter of this thesis. When discussing the identity of female authors, the ideas of ‘self-fashioning’ expressed by Steven Greenblatt in his seminal work *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*⁶⁴ are useful in order to question individual as well as collective notions of the self. Greenblatt points out the importance of looking at literature in three ways: “as a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon these codes.”⁶⁵ He goes even further, suggesting that when we analyse literary texts, it is:

not that we may see through them to underlying and prior historical principles
but rather that we may interpret the interplay of their symbolic structures with
those perceivable in the careers of their authors and in a larger social world as

⁶⁰ Michel de Montaigne, from *Essays*, quoted in Seàn Burke, ed., *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2000 [1995], 309.

⁶¹ Burke, ed., 305

⁶² Montaigne in Burke, ed., 309-311, here 309.

⁶³ Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich, “From the Individual to the Person. Challenging Autobiography Theory”, Ulbrich, ed., 2015, 32.

⁶⁴ Steven Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980.

⁶⁵ Greenblatt, 4.

constituting a single, complex process of self-fashioning and, through this interpretation come closer to understanding how literary and social identities were formed in this culture.⁶⁶

The relationship between identity and ‘the self’ in the analysed female secular discursive prose is analysed in line with recent scholarship’s notions regarding the ‘collective identity’, such as families, academies, cities, and ‘relational identity’ within certain social roles or towards the homeland or native place. Civic identity, or locating and connecting selves within one community, a specific place or country, in the cases of these three women writers, proves to be highly important, as present and highlighted in their writings. In general, during the early modern period, the significance of civic identity had an enormous impact on individual lives and on literature, which may be seen in the constant references to the homeland and the pride of belonging to it, such as in the case of Speranza di Bona, or the critique of it, as we read in Maria Gondola’s writings.

As already pointed out, these works represent the testimony of the existence of social and cultural networks, and provide valuable data about patronage relationships. Micro-history could give us some answers, but rather than being representative, it might provide us with the tools, to paraphrase Zemon Davis, to narrate the facts, from which we may learn more than we can find in themselves. She states:

there is no point in writing a history of women that is concerned only with women’s actions and modes of life and not with the way in which discourse influenced behavior, or vice versa. Taking women seriously involves reconstructing their actions within the context of the relations that men and

⁶⁶ Greenblatt, 6.

women instituted between themselves. It involves viewing relations between the sexes as a social construct whose history can and should be an object of study.⁶⁷

Within the texts being analysed in my dissertation, social relations, which always include the power relationship, become important. And in the same context, the concept of authorship becomes significant. I undertake a close analysis of legitimization strategies for authorship as applied by these women authors, which are compared not only between themselves but also to some influential male writings. The early modern period is characterized by a renewed interest in classical studies, and “rhetoric, in a variety of forms, was a central concern.”⁶⁸ In the texts presented here, female authors tried to persuade, “to make it clear to the world” that what they had to say was truth. The three forms of persuasive appeal, *logos*, used to describe the argument, *pathos* or emotions, and *ethos*⁶⁹ meaning the “cultural capital [the author] brings to his speech from his external reputation, and the impression of character he creates for himself through his speech and gesturalty”,⁷⁰ are all taken into consideration in my analysis. I would argue that these authors are at the same time the subjects who write but also subjects who are written, being at the same time “producers of the text” and “its products”.⁷¹ The three female authors presented in this study (as well as the fourth one, Fiore Zuzzori, whose authorship is still not proved), are not only understood as traditional biographical entities (which would fall under the category of ‘women writers’), but also and in the first place as ‘female authors’ – therefore a textual and material construct. Here I rely on

⁶⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge, “Women as Historical Actors”, *A History of Women: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, Zemon Davis and Farge, eds, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1994 [1991], 2.

⁶⁸ Bizzell and Herzberg, eds, 463.

⁶⁹ Theresa Enos, ed., *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition. Communication from Ancient Times to the Information age*, New York, Routledge, 2009, 506.

⁷⁰ Virginia Cox, *A Short History of the Italian Renaissance*, London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 2016, 120.

⁷¹ Burke, “Reconstructing the Author”, Burke, ed., xv.

feminist theory on the female authority question and the place of women in “the state and estate of authorship.”⁷²

These forms are useful for understanding the mechanisms of power relationships and ideology within a culture, as well as reactions against that power. Patricia Pender in *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty*⁷³ states that in women's writings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries one pattern appears consistently, and that is the disavowal of authorship. She states that “from the late Middle Ages to the early eighteenth century, early modern women deploy a panoply of modesty tropes, the most striking of which is that species of *occupatio* or apology in which the woman writer denies her own authorial agency”.⁷⁴ Women used modesty tropes which were, in Pender's words, a kind of “authorial alibi”. In this context gender becomes an important category, as the personal female *ethos* depends on the social ethos, and if she wanted to be taken seriously a woman needed to accept the values of her society.

Moreover, because the speaker's character is a matter of great importance in public discourse, gender enters into persuasion. As a rhetor, one's personal ethos depends significantly on community ethos – that is, on the extent to which the individual exemplifies the community's values. To be treated as credible, a woman is expected to exemplify the community conception of femininity. As a rhetor, however, she is expected to embody qualities that traditionally are associated with masculinity. In other words, ‘any public performance for a woman (except as an actress or a prostitute) is a form of cross-dressing’.⁷⁵

⁷² Burke, “Feminism and the Authorial Subject”, Burke, ed., pp. 145-150.

⁷³ Patricia Pender, *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

⁷⁴ Pender, 1.

⁷⁵ Enos, ed., 263.

The dedication of a book, as a pre-textual opening space, represents direct communication from the author to the audience, which includes “offering the work as a token of esteem to a person, a real or ideal group, or some other type of entity”.⁷⁶ The meaning and purposes of the dedicatory text have changed constantly, depending on historical period, culture, or genre. Dedicating a book to someone was common practice in the early modern period, but the dedicatory text was usually written either by the authors of the book or by printers, curators, or publishers. Moreover, a common practice was to choose rich and powerful patrons as the dedicatees of the work, making the dedication a “tribute that was remunerated.”⁷⁷ As a paratextual element and micro-genre, dedicatory epistles have been underestimated and neglected within the literary canon and by literary historiography in general.

I would like to add, although it might be obvious, that in performing such an analysis I consulted primary sources held in the archives, taking into consideration the relationship between text and its material form, as well as the material facts of printing, circulation, and consumption. All work written by women authors in this study was consulted in its original form, which I found in the libraries and archives in Siena, Prague, and Ragusa. In the case of Maria Gondola, there is confusion among scholars regarding the two editions of her book, and sometimes the first edition has not been taken into consideration. I consulted the first edition of the book at the Historical Archive in Dubrovnik, and it is possible to find the second edition in the British Library. In Prague, in the collection of Milan Rešetar, which today belongs to the National Library of Prague, I found Di Gozze and Di Monaldi’s work, which I analyse further. In Siena, at the Biblioteca degli Intronati, I worked on the only copy of Di Bona’s work,

⁷⁶ Genette, 117-143.

⁷⁷ Genette, 119.

which in the meantime became available online. The work by Camilla Herculiana can also be found in electronic format, as well as in the Paduan archive.

v The second half of the sixteenth century

The period on which the thesis concentrates is the second half of the sixteenth century, especially (though not exclusively) 1569 to 1584, when the three works appeared. The first version of the dedicatory epistle written by Maria Gondola is dated 15th July 1582, and the second version is dated 27th March 1585. The book written by Speranza di Bona is not dated, but the dedicatory epistle is dated 1569. And Camilla Herculiana published her book in 1584. Apart from these *texts*, certain *events* influenced or shaped the texts' appearances. Firstly, the tradition of women's writing reached its peak in the sixteenth century. Women, of course, continued to write in the seventeenth century, but the sixteenth century was in many ways the more prolific century for women in Italy. On the other hand, it is in the sixteenth century that *epistola* becomes *liber*, and hence a literary genre. Moreover, the second half of the sixteenth century in the Italian context represents, in the words of Cherchi, "a half century of plagiarism",⁷⁸ something that it is very important to take into account when analysing the dedicatory epistle by Maria Gondola.

The first half of the sixteenth century was marked by the wars between Spain and France, which became known as the "wars of Italy" (1494–1559). Speranza di Bona, who lived in Manfredonia, wrote about these wars and the period after in her anthology, supporting the rule of Spain rather than France. In her anthology we read

⁷⁸ I refer to the ideas expressed by Paolo Cherchi, *Polimatia di riuso: Mezzo secolo di plagio (1539-1589)*, Roma, Bulzoni Editore, 1998a.

sonnets, for example, on the death of Charles V, the siege of Malta 1565, and the wars in Siena.⁷⁹

Moreover, as one more event which connects the texts presented in this thesis is the censorship, it is important to mention the decision made by the Inquisition, *Sant'Ufficio della romana ed universale inquisizione*, to issue an edict in 1543 requiring every book, before being sold, to be approved by the inquisitors.⁸⁰

vi Some notes regarding terminology and practical issues

All translation of primary sources into English are mine, if not otherwise specified. The complete translation of the dedicatory epistle signed by Maria Gondola is the first translation into English.⁸¹ Within the thesis I will use the notion of Italian language when referring to the language spoken on the Italian peninsula, although it is not “historically accurate to speak of an Italian language, rather than a series of dialects and regional *koinés*”.⁸² As I focus on Italian texts in Ragusa, the trilingualism (Latin, Italian, and Illyric/Slav) on the eastern shore of the Adriatic will not be analysed in detail. Similarly, I will use the noun Italy and the adjective Italian every time I refer to the Italian Peninsula, although Italy as it is today did not exist in the sixteenth century. I use the toponym Ragusa for the place that today is Dubrovnik, as well as the adjective Ragusan, following the nomenclature in the consulted texts. I also decided to use the Italian version of all names connected with the context of Ragusa, as the Italian/Roman form was used to sign their work written in Italian. The use of both versions of their names, Slavic and Italian, was the result of the Roman-Slavic symbiosis, but it was also

⁷⁹ Di Bona, 30r-30v, 46v-47r, 30r.

⁸⁰ See Vittorio Frajese, *La censura in Italia: Dall'Inquisizione alla Polizia*, Bari, GLF Editori Laterza, 2014, 19.

⁸¹ See the original of the text in the appendix 1 and the translation in appendix 2 of this thesis.

⁸² Cox, 2013, 5.

an important mark of social distinction. The Italian (Roman) versions I will use are: Maria Gondola (Marija Gundulić), Nicolò Vito di Gozze (Nikola Vitov Gučetić), Fiora/e Zuzzori (Cvijeta Zuzorić), Speranza di Bona (Nada Bunić), Giulia di Bona (Julija Bunić).⁸³ In the case of Camilla Herculiana I decided to use the version of her surname as it appears in her book, although the version Erculiani/a is accepted by the majority of the scholarship. To write female surnames finishing in 'a' (Erculiana) was a common early modern practice.

⁸³ Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika*, Dubrovnik, Hrvatska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti – Zavod za Povijesne Znanosti u Dubrovniku, 2013.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTS

This chapter sketches out the main lines of thinking about gender and women during the sixteenth century between the two shores of the Adriatic, as well as women's and men's voices in defence of women's rights, bearing in mind that conceptions of gender differed from one place to the other. Moreover, women's position in society depended on their social class, and as this thesis is dedicated to women writers, who in general belonged to the upper social class, and to some extent had the privilege of education, I will try to provide a picture of the important tendencies of the literary, historical as well as geopolitical context they belonged to. On one hand, women in general were kept in marginal positions, having more limited possibilities with regards to education, public engagement, and paid work. On the other hand, the socio-cultural and historical factors of the late sixteenth century in the Italian context made it possible for the secular women writer to appear. Women writers in Italy, according to Erdmann's 1999 study, were the most numerous when compared to the other parts of Europe, and their writings covered a range of topics, from love poetry to the defence of women's rights. The contexts analysed in this chapter are understood as the paratext which shapes the approach to the texts analysed in this thesis. According to Genette, every context – historical, social, or literary – serves as a paratext.⁸⁴ Therefore, Genette's definition of paratext can be applied here. Paratext is:

what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*, or – a word Borges used apropos of a preface – a

⁸⁴ Genette, 8.

‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back.⁸⁵

In that sense, the historical and cultural contexts I present here in some way represent the vestibule to the women’s writing, but also the “space which both frames and inhabit the text”.⁸⁶ And viewed from the opposite perspective, the cultural text with its narrativity is analysed in line with the ideas of micro-history and New Historicism. Culture is understood in all its heterogeneity,⁸⁷ and the analysed secular discursive paratextual prose becomes “functional discourse”⁸⁸ from which some ideology, as well as authorial intentions, can be read. Literature and history are parts of larger culture, and both are narratives written in line with a particular ideology. Paratexts presented in this dissertation are treated both as works of art and historical documents; power relationships are visible and articulated within the texts.

The texts and paratexts analysed in this thesis were in some respects written as a reaction to specific contexts, while at the same time they needed to fit in those contexts. Context as well as paratext is gendered,⁸⁹ and is provided here with the intention to better understand the paradoxes on which women’s literary works drew in the sixteenth-century Italian environment, and which influenced the literary environment of Ragusa. As suggested by many critics, and clearly expressed by Flórez,⁹⁰ by representing and questioning cultural tradition and its meaning, we give it new value, and in the same way we give new value to female cultural production.

⁸⁵ Genette, 1-2.

⁸⁶ See the introduction in Smith and Wilson, eds, 7.

⁸⁷ An overview of different approaches to the literary text is provided in Zorica Bečanović-Nikolić, *Šekspir iza ogledala: Sukob interpretacija u recepciji Šekspirovih istorijskih drama u dvadesetom veku*, Beograd, Geopoetika, 2007.

⁸⁸ Bečanović-Nikolić, 31.

⁸⁹ Danielle Clarke, “Signifying, but not sounding: gender and paratext in the complaint genre”, Smith and Wilson, eds, pp.133-151.

⁹⁰ Mercedes Arriaga Flórez, *Mi amor, mi juez: alteridad autobiográfica femenina*, Zaragoza, Portico, 2001.

The voice of defence by women writers in the sixteenth century cannot be looked at as an isolated phenomenon. Rather, these texts written by women should be seen in light of the constant dialogue between micro-history and macro-history, in the constant exchange between the private and the public worlds, as part of different contexts: historical, cultural, literary, and the more general context of ‘women’s literature’ and the *querelle des femmes*. Although it is impossible to write about female equality with men, as suggested by Burckhardt and later refuted by a majority of cultural historians, there are other circumstances which made the sixteenth century one of the most prolific centuries when women’s authorship, especially in the domain of literature. In this chapter I will try to present the tendencies which allowed for women’s literary production in the Italian context in the second half of the sixteenth century. This chapter argues for the importance of contextualizing Maria Gondola’s and Speranza di Bona’s work in the framework of Italian female literature and cultural tendencies within the field of both male and female writings, in the historical moment in which:

women writers went from the status of rare and miraculous, ‘phoenix-like’ exceptions to one accepted and expected social subset of literary practitioners – tiny of course in terms of numbers, by comparison with men, but punching well above their weight in terms of cultural visibility, precisely on account of their novelty.⁹¹

Until today, no study has been done in this way; rather, Gondola’s work has been treated only within the context of Ragusan literature, but a detailed analysis of her work in its larger context has not been undertaken. The recent study by Gabrielli (2015) has positioned Speranza di Bona in her larger Italian context (such as comparing her style with Neapolitan woman poet Laura Terracina’s, focusing on the direct influence

⁹¹ Cox, 2013, 2.

by Ariosto, and drawing from cultural history). If we take into consideration the fact that the first anthology penned by a woman in the Italian context appeared in 1559,⁹² Di Bona's anthology, probably published just ten years later, should gain additional value. As both Maria Gondola and Speranza di Bona were connected with Ragusa, and also with Italian culture and literature, contextualising their work is indispensable.

In pursuing such an aim this chapter is structured around four basic questions: who, what, where, and why. It is divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on the tendencies and main cultural and historical patterns in women's authorship and representation in the sixteenth century in Italy and Ragusa. The second part covers women's authorship, the *querelle des femmes*, and its meaning. It will be argued that women writers, as well as male writers who in their treatises defended women's rights, paradoxically used 'man-made' rhetorical strategies, patterns, and ideas on womanhood, inherited from the past, which were previously, and indeed continued to be, used to prove female inferiority. This chapter argues that the Italian socio-cultural and literary context of the sixteenth century was the most favourable for the emergence of "the secular woman writer", and therefore the case of female writing in Italian on the eastern shore of the Adriatic should be understood with this consideration in mind.

1.1 Ideas on womanhood and gender

Ideas of womanhood, femininity, and gender in the early modern period were based upon at least five main views inherited from the past. In the first place, when women's position within society and the family is taken into consideration, the influence of Roman law should be highlighted.⁹³ Apart from this, the ideas of Christianity in the books of the Old and New Testaments, philosophical works by Plato and Aristotle, and

⁹² As pointed out by Cox, 2013, 2.

⁹³ Roman law was the basis of Ragusan law, which was embedded in the book of the Statute.

Galen's ideas on medicine, later repeated in the work of scholastic philosophers, became the basis of philosophical thought during the early modern period. These ideas have their peak in the sixteenth century, when the number of printing houses drastically increased, and when the revival of interest in classical thought on the Italian peninsula was reinforced by many translations from Greek and Latin. These doctrines not only influenced women's position within society, but also had an important impact on early modern writers when constructing their picture of women in literature, in line with popular Petrarchist and Neoplatonic ideas.

1.1.1 Roman law

Justinian's Corpus of Civil Law and Canonical Law inspired legal regulations across Europe from the eleventh century onward. On the eastern shore of the Adriatic the legal system "can be defined as a combination of norms belonging to the Roman, Slav, and Common law, adapted to the social relations".⁹⁴ Female subordination to men was legally prescribed, and fortified by the exclusion of women from owning any kind of property. Women were considered incapable of rational reasoning. Within the family too, the *patria potestas*⁹⁵ meant the absolute power of the male figure – *sui iuris*, not only over the wife, but also over slaves and children who are *alieni iuris*. Women needed to be ruled; the authority of the father was later exchanged for that of the husband, and in the case of the husband's death, the authority of a male tutor. Women were not only ruled by men, they were legally owned by men, and this ownership was strictly connected with the female body:

⁹⁴Zdenka Janeković-Römer, *Rod i grad: Dubrovačka obitelj od XIII do XV stoljeća*, Dubrovnik, Hrvatska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti u Zagrebu, 1994, 20.

⁹⁵ Janeković-Römer, 1994, 13.

Ownership implies special rights not shared by other people, and the reason frankly given for guarding so jealously the virginity of a girl before marriage and exclusive enjoyment of her by her husband afterwards was the desire to insure a man heirs of his own body for the continuance of his race. Where estates and titles were in question the legitimacy of heirs easily assumed paramount importance.⁹⁶

However, the power of the *patria potestas* on the eastern coast of the Adriatic was at some point restricted, and the common law very often was more influential, so in the Ragusan statute it is not rare to find the explanation *consuetudo*,⁹⁷ the reference to the common law. The institution of marriage, for both men and women, provided the most important framework for behaviour, and one of its main purposes was to preserve the race. The woman was mainly defined in relation to the man and her role as daughter, wife, mother, and in some cases widow. The detailed prescriptions regarding dowries, the right to divorce or to remarry in the case of widows, and inheritance, that were written in statutes, treatises and conduct literature, were similar in many parts of Europe. All aspects of marriage were defined by law, from the ideal age, to the amount of dowry. However, the customary law with its own rules in some cases had more power and would become the norm. Apart from being a wife, women had few possibilities: they could go to a convent or, rarely and mainly in the northern Italian peninsula, become courtesans.

⁹⁶ Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1978 [1956], 25.

⁹⁷ Mentioned in Janeković-Römer, 1994, 15.

1.1.2 Aristotle's philosophy

The Aristotelian model of thought on women,⁹⁸ gender, and sex, from the second half of the thirteenth century, became the basis of philosophical thought in almost all Europe. First it was appropriated by medieval scholastics, especially by Thomas Aquinas, among others. From 1495, Aldus Manutius started publishing Aristotle's works in Greek in Venice, but later Aristotle's philosophy came to the early modern reader in Latin, translated by Leonardo Bruni.⁹⁹ During the sixteenth century Aristotelian thought became the basis of many university disciplines, such as medicine, natural philosophy, law, and theology. Aristotle's view of women, predominantly expressed in his *On the Parts of Animals* and *Politics* is based on a clear opposition between male and female principles. This view based on the opposition is also known as 'gender essentialism': it asserts that the differences between two sexes are biological, and therefore essential. It is based on oppositions: "the upper parts of the body have this pre-eminence over the lower parts; the male over the female; and the right side of the body over the left".¹⁰⁰ Male characteristics, as well as the male character, are seen as superior to the female. The male principle was connected with greater qualities such as activity and perfection, as opposed to the female principle which was connected with passivity. The birth of woman, according to Aristotle, was always because of a mistake in the act of generation, and his view of woman as a "mutilated man" or having a monstrous nature, usually translated as "defective man", was a highly popular argument during the early modern period for proving female inferiority. In his *Politics*, Aristotle stated:

⁹⁸ See Allen Prudence, *The Concept of Woman: the Aristotelian revolution, 750 BC-AD 1250*, Montreal, Eden Press, 1985.

⁹⁹ As mentioned in Cox, 2016, 38.

¹⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Parts of animals – Movement of animals – Progression of animals*. London. Heinemann, 1961, 121.

But the mating of the young is bad for child-bearing; for in all animal species the offspring of the young are more imperfect and likely to produce female children, and small in figure, so that the same thing must necessarily occur in the human race also.¹⁰¹

He connected the weakness of the female body with weakness of mind. And following these characteristics, the virtues of men and women were drastically different. The man was eloquent; the woman silent. The man was courageous; the woman timorous. The man uses his brain; the woman her sentiments. Her grace consist in silence: “silence gives grace to woman”.¹⁰² Moreover, “between the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject”.¹⁰³

Many early modern treatises, as will be shown further, rely on Aristotelian philosophy. According to Aristotle, nature, which should be perfect, aims to make a man – the perfect creature, and when it made a woman, it was ‘naturally’ by mistake. Her nature, predominantly humid and cold, made her timid and unstable, and therefore weak. Weakness of mind, in Aristotle’s interpretation, means lack of reason. The woman needed to be governed by something, according to the ‘natural laws’, and in Aristotle’s interpretation it could certainly not be by reason. In Aristotle’s ideas the brain is larger in men than in women, and man “has more sutures in the skull than any other animal, and males have more than females.”¹⁰⁴

Aristotle’s teacher Plato was another authority frequently quoted by early modern writers and philosophers. Regarding women’s position, his *Republic* offered the possibility that women and men might have similar virtues:

¹⁰¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, London, Heinemann, 1959, 619.

¹⁰² Aristotle, *Politics*, 65; he quotes Gorgias’ verse.

¹⁰³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, 155.

Perfect justice, Socrates argues in the dialogue, can be achieved only by suppression of the distinction between the sexes in all important matters and the admission of women on an equal footing to all activities of the city, particularly the most important, fighting and thinking.¹⁰⁵

But as pointed out by Wiesner-Hanks, he never connected women with any kind of power: “No women speak in any of Plato’s dialogues”.¹⁰⁶ In 1484, Plato’s dialogues were published in Florence, in their first Latin translation, done by Florentine philosopher and priest Marsilio Ficino. Plato’s concepts of love and beauty were widespread in vernacular literature, through Ficino’s translations and commentary, in the form of Neoplatonic thought.

1.1.3 Neoplatonic ideas on love and beauty

Neoplatonism offered a model for love and beauty, widely accepted by Petrarchism. The main ideas of Neoplatonism, rooted in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo* (*On the Soul*), and *Symposium*, came to early modern writers through the revival of translation from Greek, and mostly, as already mentioned, through the work done by Marsilio Ficino and his commentary on the *Symposium* (1480).¹⁰⁷ Within the doctrine of Neoplatonism, love is understood as desire for beauty. And beauty can be found in three aspects: the beauty of the body, perceived by the eye, the beauty of the voice, perceived by the ear, and the

¹⁰⁵ Allan Bloom, “introduction”, *The Republic of Plato*, New York, Basic Book, 1968, ix.

¹⁰⁶ Merry E. Wiesner Hanks, “Introduction”, Erdmann, ed., 1999, x.

¹⁰⁷ Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) was a doctor, priest, writer, and philosopher, who translated Plato’s works in Latin for the first time. He was protected by Cosimo de’ Medici, and under the latter’s patronage he founded the Florentine Platonic Academy, in Careggi, close to Florence. Being a priest he also tried to combine the ideas of Saint Augustine with those of Plato. Apart from his comments on Plato’s *Symposium*, *De amore*, his most important and widely read and translated books during the early modern period are: *De vita*, *De voluptate*, *De Cristiana Religione*, and *Theologia Platonica*. See: Marsilio Ficino, *De vita*, Pordenone, Il Soggetto & la Scienza, Edizioni Biblioteca dell’Immagine, 1991. He translated the *Symposium* in 1469, and his comments entitled *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis, De amore* were published in Florence in 1484. The second edition appeared in Basel in 1561. An Italian translation also by Ficino appeared in Florence in 1544, published by Cosimo Bartoli.

beauty of the soul, which can be perceived only by the mind.¹⁰⁸ The beauty of the body should never be put before the beauty of the mind, according to Neoplatonists. Love is strictly connected with goodness,¹⁰⁹ which represents the splendour of divine beauty. Perfection in a human being could be internal (which is the goodness of the soul) or external (the beauty of the body). And anyone who has both characteristics is called a blessed person.¹¹⁰ Beauty is not only connected with goodness, but also with ‘utility’ (*pulchrum e aptum, decorum e honestum*).¹¹¹ Two people who love each other want to enjoy beauty (*pulcritudine*), and there are four ways to do so, which includes owning four characteristics: “prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance”.¹¹²

The Neoplatonist representation of women¹¹³ was connected with the planets; as women were connected with earth, and men with the sun, the characteristic of strength belongs to men, and moderation to women. The man, as one who “gives”, had an active role and to him was ascribed the sun, which gives light; woman, as the one who receives, remains in a passive role, and was connected with earth as she “receives from everything and does not give to anyone”.¹¹⁴ These ideas were highly influential and frequently combined with the other ones presented here. Often the ideas of Neoplatonism synthesise Christian, Aristotelian, and Platonic thought, and the representation of women would usually be connected with two elements: air and water.

¹⁰⁸ Marisilio Ficino, *El libro dell'amore*, a cura di Sandra Niccoli, Firenze, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1987, pp. 14-16.

¹⁰⁹ Ficino, 19: “Amore è un cerchio buono el quale sempre da bene in bene si rivolta.”

¹¹⁰ Ficino, 76: “quello che è in tutto buono e bello chiamiamo beatissimo, come da ogni parte perfetto”.

¹¹¹ See: Umberto Eco, *Arte e bellezza nell'estetica medievale*, Bompiani, Milano, 1987, 22.

¹¹² Ficino, 68: “prudentia, fortitudine, iustitia, temperantia”; “Noi sogliamo chiamare negli huomini la fortezza maschia per cagione della forza e della audacia, la temperanza femina per la mansueta natura, la giustitia composta dell'uno e dell'altro sexo: maschia perché non lascia fare ingiuria ad alcuno, femina perché ella non fa ingiuria”.

¹¹³ Ficino, 58: “E la generazione masculina nacque dal sole, la femminina dalla terra, la composta dalla luna; onde erano d'animo superbo e corpo robusto. Ciascuno di noi è uno mezzo uomo, quasi segato come que' pesci che si chiamano orate, e quali, segati in lungo bene pe 'l mezzo, d'uno pesce, dua pesci restano vivi.”

¹¹⁴ Ficino, 68-69: “riceve da tutti e non da ad alcuno”.

1.1.4 Humoral theory and women

Humoral theory, the theory that there are four humours (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm) to be balanced, was also widely accepted. It was rooted in the belief that body and mind cannot be separated. This theory was inherited from Hippocrates, repeated with certain alterations in Aristotle, and accepted by Galen of Pergamum¹¹⁵ in the domain of natural philosophy and medicine. Galen also thought in terms of opposition, and explained female inferiority in opposition to male superiority.

Corresponding to the four main elements of which the whole universe consisted: earth, water, air, and fire (macrocosmos) were the four main elements of which the human body consisted (microcosmos); these in turn corresponded to mental states. In that way, element of the earth corresponds to the ‘humour’ of black bile and to a dry characteristic, which would result in melancholic character. Similarly, the element of fire – yellow bile – hot – choleric. These characteristics corresponded to men. On the other hand, air – blood – sanguine – cold, and water – phlegm – damp – phlegmatic, were the dominant ‘humours’ in women. Coldness and dampness as female characteristics were opposed to male hotness and dryness, and this could be applied to any activity, including those of the mind. The argument that women, being of cold and damp constitution, could therefore not think rationally was used as one of the main arguments when explaining female inferiority. The explanation was that God created woman as cold and humid because these characteristics were essential for giving birth; at the same time God could not give her knowledge, as coldness and humidity

¹¹⁵ Aelius Galenus or Claudius Galenus (129/130-199/200 CE), was the main influence on medicine and biology until the seventeenth century. He was a Hellenistic surgeon and physician, referred to in English as Galen.

contradict it.¹¹⁶ Indeed, in Hippocratic texts, because of menstruation, women were represented as wetter than men. For the Hippocratic writers, menstruation and nature became the same, and all weakness in women is connected with womb and the nature of female flesh. Due to menstruation women were not only considered unclean, but also as a source of possible contamination.

However, in antiquity there also existed ideas that women were in fact hot, and not cold, and both versions came to the early modern reader:

For Aristotle, whose ideas on this point were historically more influential than those of the Hippocratic, women are cold, too cold to concoct blood into semen.

Difficulties arise with this position because, in humoral pathology, blood is hot and wet. If women have more blood than men, surely they should be hotter than men?

In the debate given by Plutarch in *Moralia*, a doctor takes up precisely this position in order to argue that women are the hotter sex; this is also the argument used to prove women's hot natures by 'Parmenides and others,' according to Aristotle, and a related argument appears in the Hippocratic *Diseases of Women* 1.1, which says that 'the woman has hotter blood, and because of this she is hotter than the man.'¹¹⁷

Aristotle stated that the animals whose blood is hot are the most intelligent and the most courageous. And consequently he mentioned that there are two different opinions about women being hot or cold:

¹¹⁶ I paraphrase words of a Spanish doctor, J. Huarte, quoted in Plastina. See Sandra Plastina, "Tra mollezza della carne e sottigliezza dell'ingegno (negato): la 'natura' della donna nel dibattito cinquecentesco", *I castelli di Yale*, anno III, numero 2, 2015.

¹¹⁷ Helen King, "One – Once upon a Text: Hysteria from Hippocrates", *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. Sander L. Gildman, Helen King, Roy Porter, G. S. Rousseau, and Elaine Showalter, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993. Available at: publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft0p3003d3&chunk.id=d0e760&toc.depth=1&toc.id=d0e760&brand=ucpress. Accessed 18 January 2017.

Further, it is asserted that bloodless animals are hotter than those that have blood; and that females are hotter than males. Parmenids and others, for instance, assert that women are hotter than men on the ground of the menstrual flow, which they say is due to their heat and the abundance of their blood. Empedocles, however, maintains the opposite opinion. Again, some say that blood is hot and bile cold, other that bile is hot and blood cold.¹¹⁸

As we will see, the idea that the female sex has a hot nature was repeated in Di Gozze's *Dialoghi* (1581); Gondola (1584) defended the opposite idea, that women are cold. Paradoxically, both ideas in their writings are used to prove female superiority.

1.1.5 The authority of the Bible¹¹⁹

For centuries the New and Old Testaments served as the absolute authority in religion. This authority was reinforced by the Council of Trent (1545–1563), a long debate on the reform of the Roman Catholic Church, which resulted in the period called the Counter-Reformation. Print censorship was one of its manifestations. The Judeo-Christian tradition of equating Eve with the Fall is based on the interpretation of chapter three of *Genesis*, and its story of the expulsion from Eden. The blame for the act of disobedience, 'original sin',¹²⁰ was assigned to Eve, as she was the one to tempt Adam and to convince him to join her in sin. The woman was castigated, "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply the sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Aristotle, *Part of Animals*, 123.

¹¹⁹ The first Bible was printed by Gutenberg in 1453; in 1516 Erasmus published a Latin version of the New Testament. In 1592 there was a new edition of the Vulgate Bible issued by the Catholic Church, started by Sixto V, and revised by Bellarmine. As it was done under the patronage of Clement VIII, it was known as the Sixto Benedictine Vulgate, which remained the official Latin text of the Bible within the Catholic church until the twentieth century. It was used as *sola scriptura*, where the authority of it was not questioned.

¹²⁰ Genesis 2, 16-17.

¹²¹ Genesis, 3.

Frequently, therefore, based mainly on this argument, Eve's disobedience and 'sin' were connected with all women, who were represented as sinful, evil, and disobedient. Eve convinced Adam by talking to him; this was probably the basis for accusing women of talkativeness: "Because Eve tempted Adam by using words, women's speech becomes linked with sin and disobedience, and female silence is thus interpreted as a divine command".¹²² This view was reinforced by the "demonization of female sexuality".¹²³ For example in the book Leviticus, we can read: "A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, [or] an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife"¹²⁴. Sexuality in general was condemned by Christianity and it was not rare to find well-developed arguments concerning how sexual activity weakens the brain.¹²⁵ The creation of men and women, as presented in Genesis, was often interpreted as one more proof of female inferiority. In Genesis 2T:23 we read: "And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man"". As man is created in God's image (and the head of all men is Christ) and woman from man's rib; this offered proof that she who comes second is inferior to he who comes first.

To sum up, women were kept at the margins: in terms of education and at home, kept out of the public world, and kept within prescribed gender roles (which varied from place to place). Women's inferiority was mainly proved by Aristotle's thought (humid and cold humours not apt for active thought), bodily weakness (as a result of nature's mistake), the fact that she was made of Adam's rib, and by common as well as statutory law. As pointed out by Cox, "the entire system rested on the unstated premise that

¹²² Erdmann, 1999, IX.

¹²³ Cox, 2016, 176.

¹²⁴ Genesis, Leviticus, 21:14.

¹²⁵ As we can read, for example in Ficino's *De vita [Three books of Life]*, 1489.

women's mental and physical weakness made them unfit to live without either the institutional support of a convent or the personal protection of a man.”¹²⁶

1.2 The *querelle des femmes*

Based mainly on these doctrines, a vast amount of conduct literature on female behaviour appeared in the sixteenth century, known as conduct books or treatises, in which almost all aspects of life were defined (economy, marriage, family, education, the nature of men and women, etc.). Among them, literature concerning women and their roles within society appeared in significant numbers, especially during the sixteenth century, meanwhile “after 1630, it seems that the *querelle* in its original form had passed its climax.”¹²⁷ The new questions regarding gender roles, the intellectual and moral equality of men and women, or in some cases female superiority, ideas on the connection between love and beauty, the female position within the domestic economy, and many others, were addressed in treatises written mainly by men, which constituted the debate between the defenders and enemies of the female sex, known as the *querelle des femmes*.

There are at least three common tendencies in texts that were part of the debate about gender roles and identities:¹²⁸ (a) they are a reaction to concrete attacks – the writer defends his or her ideas as a reaction to a certain insult; (b) they always represent the justification of women and the female sex in general; (c) they attempt to prove ideas of female equality or superiority – the rhetoric of *exempla* and *auctoritates*, the establishment of catalogues, as well as the truthfulness of etymology, were the most popular ones. The first book signed by a woman in defence of women was *La Cité des*

¹²⁶ Cox, 2016, 196.

¹²⁷ Zimmermann, 23.

¹²⁸ The definition of *querelle des femmes* appeared in the work of Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des dames* (The Defender of Ladies), 1440.

dames (1404), by Christine de Pisan, who reacted to the ideas expressed in the *Romance of the Rose*, and argued against attacks on women. Her main aim was to defend women against their slanderers.¹²⁹

Lists of exemplary women both past and contemporary were usually taken from previous texts, such as Boccaccio and his *De claris mulieribus* (c.1380), who in turn based his work on Valerius Maximus, Livy, Hyginus, Tacitus, and Plutarch's *Mulierium virtutes*.¹³⁰ Boccaccio wrote about 106 women taken from mythology or history, and a few from his own time. On one hand, Boccaccio based his selection of praised women on their "virile" characteristics, such as courage, so that it was not rare to read that the woman was good because she was constant, brave and wise – as if she were a man. On the other, virtues of obedience and chastity were also highly esteemed and eulogised. Boccaccio chose to dedicate his book to Andrea Acciaïoli, the Countess of Altavilla, a choice explained by the meaning of her name: 'andro' in Greek means 'male'. Also, it should not be forgotten that Boccaccio also wrote a misogynistic work called *Corbaccio*, used by many attackers of the female sex.

The notion of the *querelle des femmes*, or "debate about women", by itself explains the vast literature regarding women's equality with or superiority to men, written polemically,¹³¹ in the form of dialogues, treatises, bibliographies, conduct books on women's behaviour (mainly regarding marriage and the domestic economy), works on beauty and love, and sometimes in the form of oral discussion at the universities, academies, courts, or salons. This practice lasted from Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*

¹²⁹ Margarete Zimmermann, "The *Querelle des Femmes* as Cultural Studies Paradigm", *Time, Space, and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, Anne Jacobson Schutte, et al., eds, Kirkville, Truman State University Press, 2001, pp. 17-29.

¹³⁰ See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Concerning Famous Women*, trans. and intro. Guido Guarino, New Brunswick, N. J. Rutgers University Press, 1963. The first Italian translation was *Libro di M. Giovanni Boccaccio, Delle donne illustri tradotto di latino in volgare per M. Giuseppe Betussi, con una giunta fatta del medesimo d'altre donne famose*, Firenze, Filippo Giunti, 1596.

¹³¹ As concluded by Kelly, 1982. She states that "their [women's] ideas arose as a dialectical opposition to misogyny", 1982, 7.

until the eighteenth century. Its peak in the Italian context was during the sixteenth century, particularly around 1580, in literary academies in Veneto. What is particularly interesting in this debate, as pointed out by Kelly, is the introduction of something which today we know under the notion of gender: “They had a sure sense that the sexes are culturally, and not just biologically, formed”.¹³² In general, works from the *querelle des femmes* were a written reaction against the dominant doctrines on women’s position within society.

1.2.1 Conduct literature and male voices within the *querelle des femmes*

Combining ideas inherited from Classical Greek philosophy and repeated by Scholastic philosophy, the Christian tradition, and contemporary literature, many influential treatises of “conduct literature” appeared on the Italian peninsula at this time, as well as in other parts of Europe. These treatises were dedicated to the citizen, and meant to provide moral, social, and religious guidance. Among this literature, work dedicated to women’s behaviour was increasingly popular. Generally, these texts could be divided into those that were pro-women and those that were anti-women, authored mainly by men. In his bibliographical study *My Gracious Silence* (1999) Axel Erdmann selected 99 books published in the sixteenth century on and for women in the European context.

The most influential and widely translated of these works was Juan Luis Vives’ (1493–1540) *Instruction of a Christian Woman, De Institutione Feminae Christianae*. It was first published in 1524 in Latin,¹³³ and went through more than forty editions and translations all over Europe.¹³⁴ Vives’ sentences and ideas were often found in other

¹³² Kelso, 7.

¹³³ The book was commissioned by Catherine of Aragon, Catholic Queen consort of Henry VIII of England and written for her daughter, Mary, to provide her with a set of instructions on how to behave based on her gender.

¹³⁴ Erdmann, 19.

treatises that came after him. For example, his statement that a woman who wants to marry should not know how to speak eloquently or speak to a man in public was widely accepted:

as for eloquence, I have no great care, for woman needeth it not, but she needeth goodness and wisdom [...] if she be good, it were better to be at home and unknown to other folks, and in company to hold her tongue demurely, and let few see her, and none at all hear her.¹³⁵

Vives also advised which books should be read by women: “Stories are good for her, but only chaste and exemplary tales that teach love of God, reverence to her mother, and the virtues belonging to women.”¹³⁶ The forbidden books, according to Vives, are those which might tempt women to a lustful life, such as Boccaccio’s *Decameron* or the Greek and Latin poets (Ovid, for example, was considered extremely dangerous for women). The ‘pro-women’ treatises tried to diminish the ideas inherited mainly from the previously elaborated five doctrines regarding women. They provided counterarguments to ideas of female inferiority, and in this way they implicitly expressed proto-feminist ideas. In some cases these works were merely translations from a work by German scholar Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535). He published in 1529 the often quoted and pirated work entitled *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminae sexus* [...] *declamation*. In this book, Agrippa praised female superiority, stating that as woman was the last to be created by God, she was therefore the end of all God’s works. He also adds that being made from human bone, unlike Adam who was made from clay, woman must be nobler and worthier. This book was

¹³⁵ As quoted in Sharon L. Jansen, *Debating Women, Politics, and Power in Early Modern Europe*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 94.

¹³⁶ Kelso, 40.

translated from French to Italian and published in 1549 under the title *Della nobilita et eccellenza delle donne, nuovamente dalla lingua francese nella italiana tradotto*.¹³⁷

In Italian, among others, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) wrote an influential – and highly useful for understanding family network relations – book of dialogues *Libri della famiglia* (written 1433–1440).¹³⁸ He spoke about marriage and chastity, as well as beauty, qualities he considered to be the most important ones in women. Alberti provided a set of rules regarding female behaviour, mainly based on Aristotle’s work on household management. In this book, chastity is the most prized characteristic in women. For example, married women should, in Alberti’s words, have a “good and moderate mind, good birth, sufficient ability to reason and talk for the service appointed, temperance, and above all piety”.¹³⁹ Another treatise on marriage published in the fifteenth century which become popular in the sixteenth is *De re uxoria* (1416), written by the Venetian Francesco Barbaro. Later, Torquato Tasso,¹⁴⁰ in his treatise on feminine virtues, *Discorso della virtu femmine e donnesca* (1582), argued mainly for an inferior position for women, using Aristotle’s ideas as the basis of his thought. However, later, in a letter to his cousin he takes completely the opposite position (1593), trying to prove female superiority. This practice of expressing different opposing ideas was quite common, and can also be found in the work of Nicolò Vito di Gozze.

¹³⁷ Agrippa, *Della nobilita et eccellenza delle donne, dalla lingua francese nella italiana tradotto. Con una oration di M. Alessandro Piccolomini in lode delle medesime*. In Vinegia appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, MDXLIX.

¹³⁸ Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia* (or *La famiglia*). It was first published in 1845; in 1734 it was published with the title *Il governo della famiglia*.

¹³⁹ Mentioned in Kelso, 114.

¹⁴⁰ Torquato Tasso, *Discorso della virtu femmine, e donnesca: Alla Serenissima Sig. Duchessa di Mantova, etc.*, Venice, Bernardo Giunta, 1582.

Another influential treatise written in Italian was *De laudibus mulierum* (1487)¹⁴¹ by Bartolomeo Goggio, who also argued for female superiority. In order to defend women, one of his arguments (which would also be used by Gondola) quoted Aristotle¹⁴² and Quintilian, “*moles carne aptos ingenio*”,¹⁴³ which means that the weaker body constitution was more apt for mental work. There are also other humanists who argued not just for the equality of women, but also superiority: Galeazzo Flavio Capra’s (Capella) *Della eccellenza et dignità delle donne* (1525, 1526), Tommaso Garzoni’s *Le vite delle donne illustri* (1588)¹⁴⁴, Luigi Dardano’s *La bella e dotta difesa delle donne in verso e prosa contra accusatori di sesso loro. Con un breve trattato di ammaestrare i figliuoli* (1554), Mario Equicola. Equicola produced the book *De mulieribus* [*Perigynecon*] (1501), which followed ideas of Galen and humoral theory, and concluded that women should be equal with men.

Among these works, the books by Sienese philosopher and member of the Accademia degli Intronati, Alessandro Piccolomini (1508–1579) require special attention, when the influence on the eastern shore is taken into consideration. He wrote *Della sfera del mondo* (the edition from 1552 he dedicated to Laudomia Forteguerra), where he expresses his lament for women being excluded from access to Latin and other forms of education. In the dedication to his *Instrumento della filosofia* (1551), he writes that he hopes that the book will be read both by men and by women, being written in vernacular.¹⁴⁵ Piccolomini’s dialogues, *La Raffaella ovvero della bella*

¹⁴¹ Here I will mention some of the most popular treatises, such as Mario Equicola, *De mulieribus* (1501), Sperone Speroni, *Della dignità delle donne* (1542), Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, *Gynerva de le clare donne*, (1490). Outside the Italian context see the work of Juan Luis Vives, Sir Thomas More, Erasmus, and most importantly Agrippa.

¹⁴² Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, 167: “the bones of males are harder than the bones of females”.

¹⁴³ Plastina, 2015, 8: “Quanto la carne e piu mole, et delicate, tanto l’insegno e piu prestante.”

¹⁴⁴ Tommaso Garzoni, *Le vite delle donne illustri della scrittura sacra*, Venetia, 1586.

¹⁴⁵ Mentioned in Ray, 2015.

creanza delle donne (1539),¹⁴⁶ treated polemical topics, and as such became a success, as in a sense they represented:

a demystification of contemporary love affairs, both courtly and Neoplatonic.

Thus, the author stresses the relative value of honour, because laws imposed by men establish that actions that are viewed as shameful for females may be viewed as a ground of honour and magnanimity for males.¹⁴⁷

1.2.1.1 Girolamo Camerata, *Trattato dell'honor vero, et del vero dishonore*

Among the other treatises, there is a very interesting one that appears not to have attracted much scholarly interest so far. It is the only work by the erudite Sicilian “doctor of arts”¹⁴⁸ Girolamo Camerata, who was active around 1567, when he published his only book *Trattato dell'honor vero*.¹⁴⁹ He was born in Randazzo, in the province of Catania, at the time part of the Spanish empire. During my research, I discovered that almost all the dedicatory text signed by Maria Gondola is plagiarised from his work.¹⁵⁰ In his treatise Camerata discusses three topics regarding honour, providing, as was typical, both the pro and counter arguments. The text is divided into three books, where the question of who deserves more honour, woman or man, soldier or literate man, artist or lawyer, is followed by the answers. The book can be found in many Italian libraries,¹⁵¹ and although the name of this work is mentioned in different catalogues and

¹⁴⁶ Alessandro Piccolomini, *Diálogo della bella creanza delle donne*, Milano, G.A. degli Antonii, 1560.

¹⁴⁷ Sandra Plastina, “Politica amorosa e ‘governo delle donne’ nella *Raffaella* di Alessandro Piccolomini”, *Bruniana & Campanelliana. Ricerche filosofiche e materiali storico-testuali*, Pisa, Roma, Fabrizio Serra Editore, XII, 1, 2006.

¹⁴⁸ It appears under his name on the cover of the book. In the original language: “dottore dell’Arti”.

¹⁴⁹ Girolamo Camerata, *Trattato dell'honor vero, et del vero dishonore. Con tre questioni qual meriti piu honore, o’ la donna, o’ l’huomo. O’ il soldato, o’ il letterato. O’ l’artista, o’ il leggista di Girolamo Camerata*, Bologna, Alessandro Bennacci, 1567. Further references to this text will use the title *Trattato*.

¹⁵⁰ See the transcription of the text of the dedicatory epistle in the appendix 1 of this thesis. All plagiarised parts are written in bold, with references to Camerata’s text.

¹⁵¹ See the Italian bibliographical catalogue of books that appeared in the sixteenth century: edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web_iccu/imain.htm. The name of Camerata here appears as Cammarata.

among other treatises, up to now Camerata has not yet been analysed in any significant detail. My thesis will attempt to remedy this by providing an analysis of one part of his book connected with the text written by Maria Gondola.

The part of the book entitled “Question where it is treated who merits more honour, the woman or the man”¹⁵² is dedicated to Anna Mendosa de Silva, the princess of Eboli. The date of the dedicatory epistle is 3rd August 1567, from Bologna. This dedicatory letter, where the author explains his intention to celebrate women, is followed by a prefatory poem dedicated to the same dedicatee. The structure of this part of the book is similar to the book of dialogues, as the reasons why women should be considered superior are opposed by counterarguments, and followed by a detailed elaboration of both sets of arguments. I will mention here all arguments because they were often used in the other popular treatises at the time, and more importantly some of them were plagiarized by Gondola. In the first part of the book Camerata provides ten reasons why women should be considered “worthier of honour, more perfect, nobler and more excellent than men.”¹⁵³ The first reason is connected with Christian thought, and the proof of female excellence should be sought in the fact that women are made from flesh, and men from mud, and consequently the soul “will perform more perfect actions in her, than in men”.¹⁵⁴ The second reason refers to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, and argues that people’s nobility is strictly connected with their place of birth: one born in the city is nobler than one born in a villa, for example. The woman, being made after man, and made already in paradise (the Garden of Eden), should be considered as more valuable. The third reason is explained on two pages, and refers to the definitions and descriptions, and the belief that every name is connected with the nature of the thing.

¹⁵² Camerata, 2r-24r: “Questione dove si tratta chi piu meriti honore o’ la donna, o’ l’huomo”.

¹⁵³ Camerata, 4r.

¹⁵⁴ Camerata, 4v: “(animo) opererà piu perfette attioni in lei, che nell’huomo”.

This argument is based on the etymological connection of the name ‘donna’ with the Latin verb *dominare*. The next argument in favour of female superiority is that more honour is given to women by God, which is followed by an argument which is very frequent in the *querelle des femmes* literature, the platonic idea that the beauty of the body is the clear evidence of the beauty of the soul. The next argument was also often used in proving female superiority and/or equality. If women are loved by men, being the object which made men love, they must then be worthier. The seventh reason, according to Camerata, can be found in the fact that women enter puberty and can reproduce earlier than men (girls at 12 years old and boys 14), and therefore Nature conducts women towards perfection before men, which means “that women are dearer to the Nature, and first understood by Nature.”¹⁵⁵ Following this, tenderness as a female characteristic is connected with learning, and nourishment of children, which is one more proof of female aptness to learning. The ninth reason is the female aptness to both letters and arms, as can be seen in the goddess Pallas (Minerva). The tenth and the last reason is another reference to Aristotelian philosophy: the more tender the flesh, the more apt the mind.

Following these ten ‘pro-women’ arguments, the author provides ten ‘pro-men’ arguments, although his explanations are much shorter. They are organised as counterarguments to the already listed pro-women points. For the first, because the man was the first to be created, he should be considered the most perfect. For the second, Camerata refers to Aristotle’s ideas of form and *materia*, and women are imperfect as *materia*, and men are perfect (form), and perfect never desires to become imperfect. The third reason goes again to Aristotelian thought, and considers woman “the monster of nature”. Consequently, he invokes humoral theory, and the idea that hotness and

¹⁵⁵ Camerata, 8r: “Adunque segue, che elle siano più care ad essa natura, e che siano prima intese da lei, che gli huomini non sono.”

dryness in men should be considered as more perfect than humidity and coldness in women. Due to the humours, women are timid and weak, while men are courageous and strong, which of course should be understood as a proof of men's perfection. In the sixth argument, he explains that the art of arts, letters, and the sciences are in the male domain, which should serve as proof of their supremacy. The man has more merits; he was convinced by Eve to try the forbidden fruit. Because of that, Eve was castigated, destined not only to give birth in pain, but also to be "submitted to the men's will, that he was her master".¹⁵⁶ At the end, he refers to the law (which is supposed to be rightful and just), which gives the offices and magistrate to men, and not women. As the offices of the city are divided in two parts, temporal and spiritual, in all old scriptures everything connected to the spiritual was reserved for men, and forbidden to women. Women could not, for example, become priests, a fact which once again served to prove female inferiority.

The third part of this narrative is entitled "*Discorsi*", and here the author analyses the aforementioned reasons for female/male superiority. He mentions that all liberal arts, philosophy, medicine, law, administration, government, "in one word all virtuous discretions"¹⁵⁷ are in the male domain. However, there are women "who as the stars strewn in sky illuminate and adorn their sex, as rare flowers in the garden", such as Margarita d'Austria.¹⁵⁸ Then, analysing the ideas of humoral theory, he adds that for women it is much easier to learn letters and all intellectual things. It was mainly argued that all four humours existed in both men and women. As Kelso summarises, women's temperament was explained as something which could not be reproached in women:

¹⁵⁶ Camerata, 13r: "ma insieme essere sottoposta alla volonta dell'huomo, si che egli fosse signor di lei."

¹⁵⁷ Camerata, 14r: "in somma, tutte le facoltà virtuose".

¹⁵⁸ Camerata, 14r: "quali come stelle sparse per lo cielo illuminano et adornano il sesso loro [...] questa è l'altezza di Madamma Margarita d'Austria".

the dominating heat and dryness of men's temperament, which drives them on to great exploits, also breeds more ardent passions, the enemies of reason.

Therefore, women, of the opposite temperament, are more likely to have the mean amount necessary for activity of the mind. Their heat being more modified by humidity, they are less hasty, not so quick to feel anger, and hence more considered in their judgments.¹⁵⁹

Following this, there is a part entitled "Answer to the arguments in favour of women", and immediately after comes "Answers to the arguments in favour of men", with which this narrative finishes. He finishes his narration stating that it is obvious that both women and men are imperfect, but they also have perfections, but if it must be concluded, women are those who have more perfection, "and the other should keep quiet [...] and keep them (women) as friends in excellence, moreover superior in perfection."¹⁶⁰

Using the form of providing two sides of one idea makes this treatise close to the dialogue, which was the most popular form of prose treatise in Italy. However, provision of an extended list of questions followed by answers can also be found for example in Landi's treatise against women.¹⁶¹ When writing about gender relations, he uses similar rhetoric as his contemporaries, putting women in front of the masculine eye, as was common at the time, and most visible in Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano*.¹⁶² He supports his arguments by examples drawn from mythology and contemporary and ancient history. He also uses authorities popular in the early modern

¹⁵⁹ Kelso, 16.

¹⁶⁰ Camerata, 24r: "dunque tacciano coloro [...] le tengano per compagne nella eccellenza, anzi per superiori in perfettione".

¹⁶¹ See Kelso, 1956.

¹⁶² See below.

period, such as Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates, finding the greatest authority in the book of Genesis and the law.

As a defender of women, Camerata answered the common charges against women, one by one, and his work is an example of the paradox of how arguments once used as reproach can be used in order to prove the opposite, something which it is possible to find in many other similar works. For example, he accepted both ideas taken from humoral theory, that women are cold, when he wanted to prove their inferiority, and that they are hot when he proved their superiority. Furthermore, it shows how bodily weakness as proof of mental inferiority can easily be turned to women's advantage, with the argument that tenderness of the body is connected with better mental activities. It should be pointed out that whether a positive or negative representation of women is in question, Christian female qualities, such as chastity and humility, are always praised in women. That is, in the words of Ruth Kelso, "the suppression and negation of self is urged upon her, even by those that love and admire her most".¹⁶³

1.2.1.2 Baldassar Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*

The most influential conduct book in the sixteenth century was without a doubt Baldassar Castiglione's (1478–1529), *Il libro del Cortegiano*¹⁶⁴ (1528). In the dedicatory letter to don Michel de Silva, Castiglione wrote that he decided to publish the book because one unauthorised manuscript was already circulating in southern Italy, in Naples.¹⁶⁵ This, of course, can be understood in line with the topos of modesty, but it

¹⁶³ Kelso, 36.

¹⁶⁴ Castiglione, Baldassare, *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, Milano, Garzanti, 2013. The English translation I use is *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby, London, Dent, 1966.

¹⁶⁵ Castiglione, 2013, 4, in the dedicatory epistle: "Al reverendo ed illustre signor Don Michel de Silva Vescovo di Viseo: In ultimo seppi che quella parte del libro si ritrovava in Napoli in mano di molti".

can also serve as the basis for constructing the assumption that the manuscript of the book was already circulating, as its first version was already available in 1515. *The Book of the Courtier*, after the first edition in 1528, was reprinted in 1531, 1533, and 1537. More than 40 editions were published in Italy during the sixteenth century.¹⁶⁶ However, the influence of ideas expressed in this, in the words of Quondam, “big ‘European’ book”¹⁶⁷ could be traced all over Europe, and so also on both shores of the Adriatic.

The book is written in the form of a dialogue, set in Urbino in 1506, and divided into four books. It gives explanations “of which sort should be he who merits the name of the perfect courtier”.¹⁶⁸ The dialogical structure is always organised around one main theme, with one interlocutor who exposes it, and the other who discusses it. The third book contains the most important notions in regards to gender relations, as it is dedicated to the ‘court lady’ / *donna di palazzo*. The role of the main interlocutor is assigned to Giuliano de’ Medici, the youngest son of Lorenzo de’ Medici, and his main opponent is Gasparo Pallavicino. For example, in the discussion on women’s qualities such as beauty and grace, related by “soft and delicate tenderness”,¹⁶⁹ they are always, as pointed out by Quondam, “set up in front of an eye which observes: the male eye above all.”¹⁷⁰ The aim of the third book is to give instructions on how to form the perfect courtly lady. Their first role is that of mother and wife, but a woman should also be educated, she should know about literature, music, painting.¹⁷¹ The woman should

¹⁶⁶ How popular the book was can be seen in the number of its editions, more than one hundred in the sixteenth century alone, and its translation into six languages: Polish, Latin, English, German, French, and Spanish. Mentioned in Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione’s Cortigiano*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995.

¹⁶⁷ Castiglione, 2013, viii.

¹⁶⁸ Castiglione, 2013, 15: “di che sorte debba esser colui, che meriti chiamarisi perfetto cortegiano”.

¹⁶⁹ Castiglione, 2013, 265 (3.4): “una tenerezza molle e delicata”.

¹⁷⁰ Castiglione, 2013, xxi. Introduction by Quondam: “Messa in scena rispetto a un occhio che osserva: un occhio maschile soprattutto”.

¹⁷¹ Castiglione, 2013, 272 (3.9): “Voglio che questa donna abbia notizie di lettere, di musica, di pittura, e sappia danzar e festeggiare”.

possess the virtues of the soul, such as prudence, magnanimity, continence, and be good and discreet. Moreover, she should be a good mother and wife, serious and wise.

Finally, according to Giuliano de' Medici, women should learn how to handle weapons, an idea which we also find in Gondola's writings. In the words of Gasparo Pallavicino, she should possess all qualities of the courtier:

forsomuch as the verie same rules that are given for the Courtier, serve also for the women, for aswell ought she to have respect to times and places, and to observe (as much as her weaknesse¹⁷² is able to beare) all the other properities that have beene so much responded upon, as the Courtier.¹⁷³

The most interesting part of the book is a short philosophical discussion of whether woman was indeed a mistake of nature, or whether women can be considered as equal to men (chapter 12, book III). Giuliano de' Medici, replying to Pallavicino's ideas on female imperfection, states that the essence of men and women is the same, so nobody can be more perfect than the other, and the fact that they are different is an "accidental thing, not essential",¹⁷⁴ a similar point to one made in Camerata's writings. This was one of the often-repeated arguments in defending the female sex, relying on Aristotelian ideas on accidental and essential characteristics of things. He also added that in philosophy there is the understanding that the weaker the body, the more apt the mind.¹⁷⁵ Among other things, when Gasparo, who tried to prove female inferiority, mentioned that every woman would prefer to be a man, and thus must want perfection, Giuliano de' Medici answered: "the silly poore creatures wish not to bee a man to make them more perfect, but to have libertie, and to be rid of the rule that men have on

¹⁷² Weakness in the Italian original is *imbecilita*, which meant 'incapacity' or 'weakness', and not the 'imbecility' in the notions of today.

¹⁷³ Castiglione, 1966, 263.

¹⁷⁴ Castiglione, 1966, 275.

¹⁷⁵ Castiglione, 1966, 276.

their owne authoritie chalanged over them”.¹⁷⁶ He understands women and their position, but nevertheless also calls them “silly poor creatures”.

Women take part in the discussion too: the duchess, who, in the words of Marina Zancan, represents the figure of “the recognition of female valour”;¹⁷⁷ Emilia Pio, who asks for the ideas to be expressed clearly, without using such complicated words which cannot be understood by the majority; Margherita Gonzaga, and so on. The rhetorical strategy of *exempla* is also present in this book, citing women from the past who knew philosophy, literature, and manual works. From examples that we also find in Gondola’s text, there are Cornelia, Porcia, Nicostrata – Evander’s mother.¹⁷⁸ There are also some contemporary exempla; Luisa Mulas¹⁷⁹ provides a list of 270 exempla in Castiglione’s four books of *Il libro del Cortegiano*.

There are two important concepts developed in this book: ‘*sprezzatura*’ and ‘*grazia*’. *Sprezzatura* (from *sprezzare* – to disdain) as the concept is explained in the first book, in the 26th chapter, involves the idea of appearing to have a certain nonchalance, of not showing how much work had been put in in advance, or to perform everything without difficulty in the courtly context.¹⁸⁰ Such an act was possible using the rhetoric of “dissimulation”. As pointed out by Quondam, this ideal of *sprezzatura* comes from Cicero’s *Orator* and the concept of “*negliegentia diligens*”, “diligent negligence”.¹⁸¹ Apart from the concept of *sprezzatura*, Castiglione uses certain other old concepts. For example, he explained that there is a *regola universalissima*, a universal rule under the name *grazia*, or grace, which should be used in all aspects of courtly life:

¹⁷⁶ Castiglione, 1966, 200.

¹⁷⁷ See Marina Zancan, “La donna e il cerchio nel ‘Cortegiano’ di B. Castiglione. Le funzioni del femminile nell’immagine del corte”, Zancan, ed., pp. 13-56.

¹⁷⁸ Meanwhile Gondola follows De Guevara’s text, and wrongly states that she was Evander’s wife. See chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹⁷⁹ Mentioned in Quondam’s introduction. See Castiglione, 2013, xxxii.

¹⁸⁰ Castiglione, 2013, 59-60 (1.26): “usar in ogni cosa una certa sprezzatura che nasconda l’arte e dimostri ciò che si fa e dice, venir fatto senza fatica e quasi senza pensarvi”.

¹⁸¹ See introduction by Quondam in Castiglione, VII -LI.

in communication, dancing, riding, painting, etc. The courtier should be noble, but not only by birth; his nobility is connected with the gracefulness of his mind. Whoever possesses grace is worthy of the grace of God. To do everything without fatigue and with a certain grace, that was the ideal of both the courtly lady and the courtier.

In Burke's words, "Castiglione's dialogue looks very much like a guide to self-fashioning",¹⁸² as the person is the one who should decide and practice how to present her/himself, to frame the ethos of the individual during the early modern period.

Regarding gender relationships, although different ideas on women and gender existed already, since the fifteenth century, the dissemination of this book contributed to the *querelle des femmes* in a way which cannot be compared with any other work; it provides us with the ideas of socially accepted female and male identities and male and female positions. There is a document which proves that in Ragusa in 1549 there were six copies of the book.¹⁸³

1.2.2 Conduct literature by two writers from Ragusa, Benedetto Cotrugli and Nicolò Vito di Gozze

Conduct literature was also written by writers from Ragusa, in Italian and obviously published in Italy, as the first printing press did not appear in Ragusa until the end of the eighteenth century. There are two authors usually mentioned by the scholarship, Benedetto Cotrugli, and his *Il libro dell'arte della mercatura* (1573), who was originally from Ragusa but who lived in Italy, and Nicolò Vito di Gozze, the husband of

¹⁸² Peter Burke, 2-3.

¹⁸³ Konstantin Jireček, "Inventar einer Büchersendung aus Venedig nach Ragusa 1549", *Archiv für slavische Philologie* XXI, Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1899, 511-515, available at: ia801409.us.archive.org/10/items/archivfrslavisc00pastgoog/archivfrslavisc00pastgoog.pdf. Accessed on 8th February 2016.

Maria Gondola, who wrote *Governo della famiglia*¹⁸⁴ (1589), which was published in Venice.

Benedetto Cotrugli (1416–1469), a Ragusan merchant, economist, scientist, diplomat, and humanist, wrote the book *Della mercatura e del mercante perfetto* by 1458, but the first printed version appeared in 1573 in Venice.¹⁸⁵ Apart from instructions on trade and prescribed roles for a merchant, he gives advice about other aspects of life, such as education, religious practices, and marriage. The book is divided into four parts ('books'). The first and longest treats ideas about commerce and mercantile works. The second is entitled "on the faith appropriate to the merchant", the next one focuses on the civil life of the merchant, and the fourth one, entitled "About Merchant and Economic Virtues"¹⁸⁶ treats the merchant's ability to manage the household.

In the sixth chapter of the fourth book, entitled "About Woman", Cotrugli gives a list of eighteen qualities expected in a woman: "A woman must be reasonable, constant, serious, kind, diligent, gentle, modest, merciful, pious, religious, magnanimous, reserved, discrete, hard-working, sober, abstinent, witty and always busy"¹⁸⁷. According to Cotrugli there are three important qualities in women. The first is to be honest. The second is to be useful, which means having a good dowry, inheritance, and wealth, "things which should not be looked for, but if they come to you

¹⁸⁴ Nicolò Vito di Gozze, *Governo della famiglia, di M. Nicolò Vito di Gozze, Gentil'huomo Raguseo, Accademico occulto: Nel quale brevemente, trattando la vera Economia, s'insegn, non meno con facilità, che dottamente, il Governo, non pure della Casa tanto di Città, quanto di Contado; ma ancora il vero modo di accrescere, e conferuare le ricchezze. Con una tavola delle cose piu notabili. Con privilegio. In Venetia, CIC D XXCIX.*

¹⁸⁵ See Benedetto Cotrugli (Benedikt Kotrulj), *Libro del arte dela mercatura: Knjiga o vještini trgovanja*, ed. and trans. Zdenka Janeković-Romer, Zagreb, HAZU, 2009.

¹⁸⁶ Cotrugli, 287: "Comencia lo quarto, delo mercante circa li virtù icognomiche".

¹⁸⁷ Cotrugli, 305: "Deve la donna essere prudente, constante, grave, piacente, studiosa, umana, modesta, misericorde, pia, religiosa, magnanima, continente, pudica, diligente, sobria, abstimente, sagacie et operosa et sempre nel exercicio di lavorare".

together with another dowry of honesty, you should not escape”.¹⁸⁸ The third asset is delightfulness, which consists of beauty, because she who has beauty has received it from God. Since both beauty and utility will diminish with years, he explains that the first asset is the most important: “*ben honesto*”, to be honest, because it can last forever. It is possible to find similar lists in the other treatises written by men during his lifetime and later.¹⁸⁹

There is an interesting section in which Cotrugli explains the reasons why he decided to educate his daughters. After praising the power of knowledge, calling it “the salt of the soul”,¹⁹⁰ he explains that although some might be surprised by his decision to educate his daughters and provide them with the opportunity to learn Virgil’s verses in Latin, he decided to do so not only to make them good grammarians and rhetoricians, but to make them reasonable and wise, with a good, solid, and healthy memory, which is the highest dowry a person can have.¹⁹¹ The fact that he needed to defend the act of educating his daughters is not unique; almost all humanists whose daughters were educated explained the importance of Christian reading for them. The rhetoric used to defend this idea is also interesting: it needed to relate to the “dowry”, as that was the only objective value noble women had in early modern Italy and Ragusa.

Similar to in the other dialogues at the time, this book is based mainly on Aristotelian thought, and borrows among others the idea that women were created by

¹⁸⁸ Cotrugli, 304: “Però che tre beni generalmente sogno in donna. Lo primo è bono honesto et questo e in nele virtù. Lo secondo è bono utile, e queste songo dote, sucession e richeçe, le qual cose non se deono ciercare, ma se ti venngono insieme con l’altre dote del ben honesto, non dico che non se debino pigliare. Terço è ben delectabile”.

¹⁸⁹ Such as the one made by Della Chiesa, and mentioned in Kelso, 135. Women should be “devout, compassionate, religious, above all continent, obedient, temperate, law-abiding, patient, pitiful, firm in adversity, modest in fortune, just in rule, willing to die for family and country, charitable, and most resplendent of all, chaste”.

¹⁹⁰ Cotrugli, 55.

¹⁹¹ Cotrugli, 309: “Et pero multi me anno ripresso peche io faccio impare le mee figliole gramaticha et recitare multi versi di Virgilio a mente. Faccio non solamente per farle perfecte gramatiche et retoriche, ma per farle prudente, savie, e di bona, salda et sana memoria, dele qual cosse nulla po essere magior dote a chi a sentimento, beato lo giovene chi visse abate”.

God as an error, as he wanted to create man. Cotrugli also refers to Valerius Maximus, Cicero, Dante, Boccaccio, and so on; he provides the picture of the ideal woman, who should be educated, but only to make life happier and easier for their future husbands; she should also possess the Christian virtues of honesty, beauty of the soul, and utility. The most beautiful ornament every woman should possess should be the grace of silence. Following Christian ideals, marriage is connected in the first place with its procreative function, and relations between wife and husband are mainly based on respect.

Another book, which provided Nicolò Vito di Gozze with the appellation “the writer of the first pedagogical book on this shore of the Adriatic”, is *Governo della famiglia* (1589). Here he analyses in detail “the real economy”, but also gives advice on family and state governance, all with one purpose: “to learn how to increase and conserve riches.”¹⁹² Female behaviour and the governance of women occupies more than one third of the book. In the manner of early modern writers of treatises of female education, he gives detailed guidance with regards to women, from how they should love to how they should dress, from how women should be a friend of silence, to the reasons for which it is permissible for a man to beat his wife, and concludes the book by analysing the difference between two types of governance, “*dominio coniugale*”, the way the husband rules over his wife, and “*dominio signorile*”, the master’s control over his servant.¹⁹³

In line with Aristotelian thought, the husband-wife relationship is presented as parental/filial, with the husband’s authority primary. According to Di Gozze, a husband should govern his wife with love and fear. He should love her, but she should be afraid of him, as that is the only way she can take him seriously. Meanwhile, a woman should

¹⁹² As it is possible to read in the title.

¹⁹³ Di Gozze, 1589, 19.

obey her husband like a daughter would. He also gives a list of the virtues women should possess, as ornaments to make them more beautiful, stating: “There are four virtues which a family woman should have, not less than all the other women in the world, for their ornaments: Shame, Compassion, Chastity, and Beauty”.¹⁹⁴

Both Cotrugli and Di Gozze’s works show clear paradoxes in view of women; she is seen as “the imperfect man” and at the same time represented as ideal woman. Motherhood is praised, and sexuality is condemned. The virtue of silence is opposed to talkativeness, but her steadfastness is praised. As pointed out by Valentina Gulin:

woman was also a threat to the social order by her very nature [...] he [Di Gozze] quoted as commonplaces the inconstancy and fickleness of women, which seemed ‘naturally to derive from the weakness and evil of her body, while on the other hand her constancy and steadfastness were always praised.’¹⁹⁵

These works by Di Gozze and Cotrugli represent the only Italian work written by authors from Ragusa, where women are publicly spoken about in line with Christian thought, connected with Neoplatonism and the ideas of Aristotle. As such, and in line with the main ideas of New Historicism, this material (conduct literature) is a useful historical source, wherein the cultural systems regarding the position of women become visible.

1.3 Other important tendencies in literature

Apart from conduct literature, there are other tendencies important for understanding the position of women, gender relations, and the Italian literary tradition and women’s

¹⁹⁴ Di Gozze, 1589, 35-39: “Quattro sono le virtù, che ad una donna di famiglia grandemente convengono, non meno ancora à tutte l’altre donne del mondo sono necessarie, per ornamento loro; e sono la Vergogna, la Pietà, La Castità, et la Bellezza.”

¹⁹⁵ Valentina Gulin Zrnić, “A Kaleidoscope of Female Images in the 15th and 16th century Dubrovnik. One of the Approaches to the Second Sex in Three Acts”, *Nar. umjet.* 37/1, 2000, pp. 43-66, here 59.

production within it, such as the standardization of the vernacular carried out by Bembo, Petrarchism, and the literature written by courtesans.¹⁹⁶ Venetian Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) worked on the standardization of Italian, specifically Tuscan, and widely promoted Petrarchism. He took the fourteenth-century Tuscan used by Petrarch (he edited *Rerum vulgarum fragmenta*, 1501) and Boccaccio as models for writing in the vernacular. With regards to Latin, Bembo suggested Cicero¹⁹⁷ and Virgil as exclusive models for imitation. Bembo was a very important figure in both his Venetian context and the wider Italian cultural environment, often quoted and referred to by contemporaries and followers. For example, Lucrezia Marinella quotes his sonnet 69 as one of the *auctoritas* that beauty comes from the heavens:

Petrarch also demonstrates in many other places that this beauty comes from heaven. Similarly, Bembo writes, ‘All the love that heaven can gather was shown to me within the space of a beautiful face and courteous, humble conversation, so that all other dear beings would become vile to me.’¹⁹⁸

Literature from both Adriatic coasts was marked by the strong influence of Petrarch’s verses (a common tendency all over Europe), especially in the sixteenth century. Petrarch’s verse was widely imitated and literary themes were created that were similar to Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*; such imitation was also a form of self-fashioning. The first poems written in the light of Petrarchism in the Slav language were collected by Nikša Ranjina (1494–1582) in Ragusa in the sixteenth century. This collection included

¹⁹⁶ Apart from the vast field of religious literature written by women, mainly connected with the convents.

¹⁹⁷ On Ciceronian rhetoric in early modern Italy see: Virginia Cox and John O. Ward, eds, *The Rhetoric of Cicero in its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2006.

¹⁹⁸ Lucrezia Marinella, *Le nobiltà et eccellenze delle donne, et i difetti, e mancamenti de gli huomini*, Venice, Giovanni Battista Ciotti, 1600; it was translated in 1999, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men*, ed. and trans. Anne Dunhill, intro. by Letizia Panizza, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999.

around 820 poems by various authors (among whom many were anonymous).¹⁹⁹ There also appeared other Petrarchist poetry in Italian, written by Savino de Bobalo and Michele Monaldi.²⁰⁰ Dinko Ragnina (1536–1607) also wrote in Italian, and his verses can be found in *Il secondo volume delle rime scelte da diversi eccellenti autori, novamente mandato in luce* (1565). He spent some time in Messina and Florence, and went back to Ragusa in 1568. His wife Maddalena Luccari is one the dedicatees in Speranza di Bona's book.²⁰¹ The development of Petrarchism was quite important for the development of female authored poetry, as together with Neoplatonism it represented a safe space to express ideas about love, and seemed not to transgress norms imposed by the society.²⁰² However, during the sixteenth century there is no evidence that women in Ragusa wrote poetry in Italian. Speranza and Giulia di Bona, who originated from Ragusa, wrote verses, but they lived in Manfredonia, in southern Italy; meanwhile Fiore Zuzzori's epigrammatic verses have still not been traced, although they are mentioned in critical works from the eighteenth century onwards.²⁰³

The emergence of '*cortigiane oneste*' (decent or honoured courtesans) can be traced to the fifteenth century, when they appeared at the papal courts in Rome. The name *cortigiana* derives from the *cortigiano*, which in Italian means a man from the court, and the adjective *onesta* meant privileged, and also recognized. They had a different and more privileged status compared to the other women who belonged to the lower group of sex workers. "Renaissance courtesans were expected to be educated, especially in music, and to supplement their physical charms with the attractions of

¹⁹⁹ See Vatroslav Jagić and Milan Rešetar, *Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa Zbornik Nikše Ranjine. O 500 obljetnici (1507–2007.)*, ed. Nikola Batušić and Dunja Fališevac. Zagreb, HAZU, 2009.

²⁰⁰ Savino de Bobali, Michele Monaldi, *Rime del nobil uomo Savino de Bobalo sordo e del signore Michele Monaldi dedicate all'eccelso senarto della Republica di Ragusa*, Dubrovnik, Carlo Antonio Occhi, 1783.

²⁰¹ As concluded by Gabrielli, 2015.

²⁰² See Cox, 2008.

²⁰³ See chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis.

conversation, wit and culture’’.²⁰⁴ The education they had allowed them to write, hence it is possible to find many poets among courtesans. The most famous courtesan today is probably Veronica Franco,²⁰⁵ thanks to her quite polemical (and in many aspects inaccurate) representation in the film *Dangerous Beauty* (1998). Franco’s work appeared in the post-Tridentine period, and her *Terze rime* (Venice, 1575) represent real proto-feminist texts, and are in many aspects similar to the texts presented in this thesis. Franco more than other courtesans (e.g. Tulia d’Aragona, probably Gaspara Stampa, Francesca Baffo, or Imperia Cognati) wrote about other women, and in defence of the female sex.

1.4 Secular women writers in the sixteenth-century Italian context

The second half of the sixteenth century witnessed the birth of secular women writers in a European context. However, the Italian peninsula was exceptional in many ways when considering early modern cultural production. According to Cox²⁰⁶ the reason for this turn in the literary and cultural context can be found in the trends in literary culture, and in the reasons behind their changing. She points out that the common notion that the Counter-Reformation was “programmatically misogynistic and [involved the] silencing of women” should be reconsidered: “Strikingly, it is during this period of Italian cultural history, that we first find treatises on women’s ‘nobility and excellence’ being published by clerics rather than laymen.”²⁰⁷ Print was more developed in Italy than in other parts of Europe, which might be an additional reason for the birth of women writers, apart from all the cultural developments connected with the Italian

²⁰⁴ Cox, 2013, 13.

²⁰⁵ Margaret F. Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

²⁰⁶ Cox, 2013, 24.

²⁰⁷ Cox, 2013, 9.

‘renaissance’. The development of print, its presence in many places around the peninsula, as well as the diminishing price of print²⁰⁸ are all important factors when women’s writings is analysed.

Another important tendency which should be taken into consideration is that women wrote mainly poetry. Written in the Petrarchist tradition, which remained the dominant lyric expression of the sixteenth century, the sonnet was the favourite form. The metrical innovation of the sonnet with two rime words, *sonetto continuo*,²⁰⁹ appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century. Unlike the past, the madrigal became a very popular form, which also meant a divergence from the strict rules reserved for the sonnet form, and, contrary to Counter-Reformation tendencies, love lyrics increased. There was an increasing importance of domestic and familial relations as well as expressions of civic pride. This was also present before, in Bembo’s poetry for instance, but the phenomenon reached its peak during the second half of the sixteenth century in the post-Tridentine period, when religious poetry was encouraged. Their secular writings appeared “plausibly in response to the same kind of moralizing impulses that encouraged the rise of religious poetry in the same period.”²¹⁰ Virginia Cox suggests that “the richness of the post-Tridentine tradition of religious verse by women [...] calls into question traditional views of the Counter-Reformation as programmatically misogynistic and silencing of women.”²¹¹ Vittoria Colonna was the most influential female poet during this period, and it was in this period that many of the aforementioned treatises on the excellence of women were written. In addition, the place given to the Virgin Mary in religious verses written by women writers can in

²⁰⁸ Cox, 2013, 24. By 1540 the production of books cost less thanks to technological innovation.

²⁰⁹ Cox, 2013, 218, Such as Laura Battiferri’s “Quel que la terra feo di nulla e ‘l cielo”.

²¹⁰ Cox, 2013, 32.

²¹¹ Cox, 2013, 9.

some cases be analysed as proto-feminist, such as in two sonnets “Alla Vergine”, written by Speranza di Bona.²¹²

However, I believe that it is important to provide some facts regarding women’s literary print production in the sixteenth century, within the Italian peninsula, with complete awareness of the impossibility of being precise in this matter, as there is still much archival work to be done. For example, manuscripts had the same importance as books (indeed in the case of women’s writing they were more important).²¹³ It was in Italy that the first secular woman writer, Vittoria Colonna, published her first book, *Rime* (1538); the first anthology to include female-authored poetry, by Vittoria Colonna,²¹⁴ Veronica Gambara, and Francesca Baffo, appeared under the title *Rime diverse di molti eccellentissimi autori* in Venice in 1545. Later, in Lucca 1559, Ludovico Domenichi published *Rime diverse d’alcune nobilissime e virtuosissime donne*. This book contained the work of more than fifty women authors, and it is the first anthology solely to include women’s poetry. The American scholar Deana Shemek points out that this anthology “proposed women’s poetry as a literary and bibliographical category, a gender turned genre”.²¹⁵ The first dictionary of female writers, *Theatro delle donne letterate*, was published in 1620 by a priest, Francesco Agostino della Chiesa, which lends support to the recent theory that the Counter-Reformation environment cannot be understood as completely negative towards

²¹² Maria Francesca Gabrielli, “*Vergine pura, Vergine bella*: note sulla rappresentazione di Maria nel canzoniere di Speranza di Bona (Nada Bunić)”, *Zbornik Međunarodnoga znanstvenog skupa u spomen na prof. Žarka Muljačića (1922-2009)*, ed. Ivica Peša Matracki et al., Zagreb, FF-Press, 2014, pp. 639-652.

²¹³ Ludovica Braidà, *Stampa e cultura in Europa tra XV e XVI secolo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2000.

²¹⁴ Vittoria Colonna, *Rime de la diuina Vittoria Colonna*, Parma, Viotti, Antonio, 1538;

Ludovico Domenichi, *Rime diverse d’alcune nobilissime e virtuosissime donne Raccolte Per M. Lodovico Domenichi, Et Intitolate Al Signor Giannoto Castiglione Gentil’Hvomo Milanese*, Lucca, Vincenzo Busdragho, 1559.

²¹⁵ Deana Shemek, “The Collector’s Cabinet: Lodovico Domenichi’s Gallery of Women”, *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy*, eds Pamela Benson and Victoria Kirkham, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 2005.

women.²¹⁶ Erdman lists around 200 women writers in sixteenth-century Italy in his study (1999).²¹⁷ Cox's study (2008) lists 150 entries for "single-authored printed works by Italian women" published from 1540 to 1659. Erdmann's study lists, for the same period, "30 published women writers for France, 20 names for Germany, 17 for England, 13 for Spain and Portugal, and 3 for the Netherlands".²¹⁸ However, creative women remained at the margins for centuries, excluded from the canon and from public life.

Women writers²¹⁹ mainly belonged to the upper classes. For example, the most noted female poets in the sixteenth century, Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara, were of noble origins. However, from the second half of the sixteenth century writing and publishing also became possible for women of lower ranks (such as Gaspara Stampa, Chiara Matraini, Moderata Fonte, and Lucrezia Marinella).²²⁰ Regarding the possibility of obtaining income, we know that Laura Terracina received an income from her poetry.

The critical reception of women's writing in the Italian peninsula began at the end of the seventeenth century, in Naples, when chronicler and editor Antonio Bulifon (1646–c.1707) republished the work of Vittoria Colonna, Veronica Gambara, Isabella Morra, Tulia d'Aragona, Lucrezia Marinella, Laura Battiferri, and Isabella Andreini.²²¹ He also republished Domenichi's anthology from 1559. In the eighteenth century Lusa Bergalli, the Venetian writer and editor, published verses by 166 women writers from

²¹⁶ See Elizabeta Graziosi, *Arcipelago sommerso. Le rime delle monache tra obbedienza e transgressione. In i Monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra Rinascimento e Barocco*, eds Gianna Pomata e Gabriella Zarri, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005, pp. 146-173.

²¹⁷ See Erdmann, 199.

²¹⁸ Cox, 2013, 2. However, in the case of Portugal and Spain, this data should be compared with recent studies, available at BIESES, www.bieses.net/base-de-datos-bieses/.

²¹⁹ There is an interesting study on Giulia Gonzaga, where it can be seen how important class is. See Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi, *Una gentildonna irrequieta: Giulia Gonzaga fra reti familiari e relazioni eterodosse*, Roma, Viella, 2012.

²²⁰ Mentioned in Cox, 2013, 13.

²²¹ Antonio Bulifon, *Rime di cinquanta illustri poetesse*, Naples, Antonio Bulifon, 1695.

the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries in *Componimenti poetici delle piu illustri rimatrici d'ogni secolo* (1726).²²² Later, in the nineteenth century, early modern female writers attracted even more attention. In the twentieth century, the most important work was done by Benedetto Croce, as he rediscovered and promoted Isabella Morra, Laura Terracina, and Veronica Franco. “On the other hand,” as Cox explains, the influence of the work by Benedetto Croce was in many ways highly problematic, as he:

contributed to the formation of a heavily reductive and stereotypical notion of the character and potential of ‘feminine literature’ (*letteratura femminile*), which he regarded as typically defective in form but redeemed by its emotional immediacy, and as writing that demanded to be read in an autobiographical key as an outpouring of heartfelt emotion.²²³

1.5 The *querelle des femmes* and female voices

As already seen, many men wrote in the Italian context of the *querelle des femmes* in the sixteenth century. However, there were also women who in their writings reacted against some misogynistic views. In the previous century (the fifteenth), there are works by Isotta Nogarola, Cassandra Fedele, Laura Cereta, and Olympia Morata. The sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century gives testimony to many works by Laura Terracina (1555), Moderata Fonte (1600), and Lucrezia Marinella (1600). They defend “Arms and letters: *ars et mars*”²²⁴ and mostly rely on exempla from the past; they “draw on the histories of illustrious women that began with Boccaccio, as well as upon similar ancient and medieval sources, for ‘exemplars’ of women’s capacities”.²²⁵ Among these Italian women writers who were defending women’s rights, there were some who wrote

²²² As mentioned in Cox, 2013, 38.

²²³ Cox, 2013, 41.

²²⁴ Kelly, 21.

²²⁵ Kelly, 24.

explicitly and exclusively on the ‘woman question’ and were praised during their lifetime. Among these, Lucrezia Marinella (1571–1653) was the most prolific, and Moderata Fonte (or Modesta Pozzo Zorzi, 1555–1592) was the first. Their work appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century, therefore after the texts which are presented in this thesis, and because of that no detailed analysis of these important books will be given by this dissertation.

Fonte’s *Il merito delle donne* was published posthumously in 1600.²²⁶ This dialogue did not appear as a direct answer to specific writings, but rather as a general reaction against the many who thought and wrote against women, and should be understood as “standing somewhere between the categories of discursive prose and fiction”.²²⁷ It is organised as a dialogue among seven women from Venice (an old widow, her daughter, young widow, two married women, a young bride, and a *dimnessa* (young marriageable girl)). It is divided into two days, written in prose, although some poems appear in the text, such as the long poem in *ottava rima* at the end of the dialogue conducted during the second day. The discussion goes over all aspects of their life, providing important testimony on the cultural networks women from the upper social class belonged to. The opposition between merit and envy is highlighted by the author, and female worth is defended using exempla, such as the Amazons, and etymology. Among other things, the right to the female education is proposed. At the very beginning, complaining about how women are seen by men, one of the interlocutors states: “we are only ever really happy when we are alone with other

²²⁶ Moderata Fonte, *Il merito delle donne* [...] *ove chiaramente si scuopre quanto siano elle degne, e piu perfette de gli huomini*, Venice, Domenico Imberti, 1600. English translation: Moderata Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997.

²²⁷ Cox, 2011, 217.

women, and the best thing that can happen to any woman is to be able to live alone, without the company of men.”²²⁸

In *La nobiltà et l'eccellenza delle donne* (1600, 1601, and 1621), Marinella replied to some of misogynist ideas expressed in Giuseppe Passi's treatise *I donneschi difetti* (1599). She was influenced by Agrippa's famous treatise²²⁹ as well as Lodovico Domenichi's *La nobiltà delle donne* (1549). It already had three editions at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Among women's detractors, Marinella selected the main two, one from the past, Aristotle, and the other her contemporary, Giuseppe Passi. She also criticizes Tasso and Speroni Speroni and their ideas on female inferiority. This is interesting, as these two authors also wrote in defence of the female sex, but what she finds problematic are their ideas about female chastity and modesty, meanwhile virtues connected with intellect are only praised in heroic women. Divided into two parts, the first entitled “The Nobility and Excellence of Women” and the second “The Defects and Vices of Men”, this book provides a fruitful discussion on different topics, such as the nobility of the names given to the female sex, the causes which produced women, women's virtue, and so on. This book represents a detailed reply to the different misogynist ideas inherited from the Christian tradition and Aristotelian philosophy, augmented by Neoplatonic ideas, using authorities from the past, such as Aristotelian ideas on the four causes, Plato's *Republic*, and Plutarch.

1.5.1 Female voices within the *querelle des femmes* and ‘secular discursive prose’

Women writers also wrote prose narratives, but in much lower amounts when compared with their poetic work. Apart from the already mentioned Lucrezia Marinella and

²²⁸ Fonte, 1997, 47.

²²⁹ Henricus Cornelius Agrippa's *De nobilitate et praecellentia foemini sexus, libellus* had appeared in Latin, twenty years earlier, in 1529.

Moderata Fonte, there was Tulia d'Aragona, who published philosophic dialogues on love, *Dialogo dell'infinità dell'amore*; Laura Terracina, whose *Discorsi sopra canti di Orlando Furioso* is perhaps the most famous; and the Paduan Giulia Bigolina, who wrote the romance *Urania*, just to mention a few of the most important. However, these prose narratives should be distinguished from 'the secular discursive prose' which includes "treatises, dialogues, 'meditations', volumes of letters, and polemical tracts".²³⁰ Within this subgenre²³¹ there is the literature in defence of women's equality (or sometimes superiority), which should be analysed in the context of the *querelle des femmes*, paying special attention to the concept of authorship.

In *The Prodigious Muse* Virginia Cox added Maria Gondola and Camilla Herculiana to the list of women who were dealing in written form with the 'woman question' in the context of the *querelle des femmes* in their secular discursive prose writings, comparing Fonte's and Herculiana's ideas on the importance of education for women, adding to the same context Maria Gondola's ideas expressed in her dedicatory epistle.²³²

As already mentioned, secular discursive prose includes letters collections and also dedicatory epistles. Women wrote letters, but they mainly had religious themes; the most famous examples of this type of letter are likely those by Catherine of Siena which were published in 1500. In the fifteenth century in the Italian context, among the letters written by women in Latin, "the most substantial surviving epistolary collection"²³³ is that penned by Laura Cereta, who wrote 82, and Cassandra Fedele, who wrote 113 letters. Isotta Nogarola signed 26 letters during the first half of the fifteenth century.

²³⁰ Cox, 2011, 213.

²³¹ There are at least 26 books written by women in this subgenre, see Cox, 2011, pp. 213-252.

²³² Cox added here also two women writers from the seventeenth century, the Venetian Jewish writer Sara Copio (c.1600–1641) and her *Manifesto*, and Isabella Sorri's *Ammaestramenti*, 1628.

²³³ Cox, 2008, 10.

In the sixteenth century few letters signed by women appeared in letter collections. In 1542, in *Delle lettere volgari di diversi nobilissimi huomini et eccellentissimi ingegni scritte in diverse materie*, there are six letters signed by women.²³⁴ Seven years later, in 1549, the female letter collection *Lettere di molte valorose donne, nelle quali chiaramente appare non esser ne di eloquentia ne di dottrina alli huomini inferiori*²³⁵ appears, attributed to Ortensio Landi. Perhaps the most famous letter collection signed by a woman is *Lettere familiari*, written by Veronica Franco and published in 1580.²³⁶ Later, Chiara Matriani's *Lettere* appeared, in 1595.²³⁷ Here should be added the book of medical and cosmetic recipes by Isabella Cortese dedicated to Mario Caboga, *I Segreti* (1561). As pointed out by Zarri, the epistolary genre was connected with women, and from the fifteenth century onwards it was no longer reserved only for the convents. The familiar discourse, love, and religion were the main topics of female letters. An example of the range of different topics covered in letters, and probably unique in the early modern Italian context, Camilla Herculiana discusses ideas from natural philosophy in her recently re-discovered book of letters, and also uses the paratextual space of the book to enter into a debate defending women's rights, as will be shown in the third chapter of this thesis.

²³⁴ See Adriana Chemello, "Il codice epistolare femminile", Zarri, ed., 1999, 33-34.

²³⁵ Ortensio Lando, *Lettere di molte valorose donne, nelle quali chiaramente appare non esser ne di eloquentia ne di dottrina alli huomini inferiori*, Vinegia, apresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, MDXLIX. About this work see Novella Bellucci, "Lettere di molte valorose donne [...] e di alcune petegolette, ovvero: di un libro di lettere di Ortensio Lando", *Le carte messaggere: retorica e modelli di comunicazione epistolare per un indice dei libri di lettere del Cinquecento*, ed. Amedeo Quondam, Roma, Bulzon, 1980, 255-276.

²³⁶ Veronica Franco, *Lettere*, Venice, 1580. In 1998 two editions of her letters appeared, one in Italian, *Lettere*, edited by Stefano Bianchi, Rome, Salerno, and the other within the *Other Voices* series: *Selected Poems and Letters*, ed. and trans. Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret Rosenthal, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

²³⁷ Chiara Matriani, *Lettere della Signora Chiara matriani, gentildonna Luchese con la prima e seconda parte delle sue rime*, Lucca, Vincenzo Busdraghi, 1595.

1.6 Between the two shores of the Adriatic

In order to better contextualise the women's writings presented here, I will try to place my research on the map. Although widely influenced by Italian culture, the republic of Ragusa had its own specific characteristics, which will be briefly shown here. People and books were circulating in both directions, many Italians came to Ragusa to work as doctors, teachers, or notaries,²³⁸ and also many men were sent from Ragusa to Italian university centres to study,²³⁹ to return to their home towns later and pass on the knowledge and experience they had acquired. Some of them went to Italy and lived there as merchants, as was the case with the family of Fiore Zuzzori, who lived in Ancon, and the Di Bona family, who stayed in Manfredonia.

The Italian peninsula in the sixteenth century was divided between Spanish and French rule. The northern and central parts of Italy consisted of autonomous states, 'comuni', city republics, and 'signorie', cities ruled by families. Southern Italy was organized as monarchy, in the form of the kingdom of Naples, and was under Spanish rule.²⁴⁰ The power of Italian cities was mainly concentrated around the duchy of Milan, the Republic of Venice, the Kingdom of Naples, and the Republic of the Florence, and it is in these centres also that we find the most important cultural *loci*, such as Venice, Padua, and Florence. Padua, the place where Camilla Herculiana lived and worked, had been an important university centre since the beginning of the thirteenth century, and was one of the most frequented places, where students from Ragusa,²⁴¹ as well as from

²³⁸ Torbarina, 1931, 19-87.

²³⁹ Jorjo Tadić, *Promet putnika u starom Dubrovniku*, Dubrovnik, Turistički savez Dubrovnika, 1939, 207.

²⁴⁰ See Gregory Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000.

²⁴¹ Arturo Cronia in *Storia della letteratura serbo-croata*, Milano, Nuova Accademia, 1956, 34, says that many people from Dalmatia would go to study to Padua and not rarely they would become professors there: "Soprattutto a Padova, dove intere generazioni di Dalmati si temprarono e si immortalano passando dal banco dello scolaro alla cattedra del maestro".

other countries,²⁴² would come to study. Some well-known intellectuals and writers from Ragusa studied at the University of Padua, among them Dinko Zlatarić (1558–1613), the poet and translator from Greek, Latin, and Italian. Zlatarić subsequently became rector of Padua University.²⁴³ It is important to mention that a Ragusan archdeacon Mario Caboga (Cordiza) (1505–1582) became doctor of theology and law at the University of Padua and was also the member of the Accademia degli Confusi in Viterbo. After finishing his studies, he came back to Ragusa and became one of the most prominent men in the Ragusan church.²⁴⁴ Although he belonged to the aristocracy, he fought against privilege, injustice, and falseness in general, which was probably the reason for his expulsion from Ragusa, something that would occur four times. Accused of heresy, he was sent to the Roman Inquisition where he successfully defended himself. Two poems by him are extant, “*Pjesma o dinaru*” (“Poem about Money”), written in Slav, and “*Contra la nobiltà di Ragusi*”, written in Italian. The date of both poems is unknown, but both, especially the latter, provide important evidence for the system of value and power within the sixteenth century Ragusan environment.

Manfredonia and all Puglia, part of the kingdom of Naples, and the place where Speranza di Bona lived, also had a long and important relationship with Ragusa, economic in the beginning.²⁴⁵ In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Republic of

²⁴² At Padua university, there existed a “Dalmatian delegation” of students. See Marin Franičević, *Povijest hrvatske renesansne književnosti*, Zagreb, Zavod Matice Hrvatske, 1986, 576.

²⁴³ Jean Dayre, *Dubrovačke studije*, Zagreb, Redovno izdanje Matice Hrvatske, 1938, 73-88.

²⁴⁴ This poem was published for the first time in Vikentij Vasiljevič Makušev, *Izsljedovanja od istoriceskih pamjatnikah i bitopisateljah Dubrovnika*, Sankt-Peterburg, Tipografija Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk 1867, 46-49. The most comprehensive study on this poem is by Bojan Đorđević, in which can also be found the most complete bibliography on his life and work. See Bojan Đorđević, “Satira ‘Contro la nobiltà di Ragusa, Marija Kabožića’”, *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor*, Beograd, Filološki fakultet, LXX. Two recent studies where some important data can be found are: Nenad Vekarić, “Držićeva firentinska urotnička epizoda”, *Dani hvarskog kazališta*, XXXV, 1, Split, Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti i Književni krug Split, 2009, 5-16.

²⁴⁵ Jorjo Tadić, *Španija i Dubrovnik u XVI v.*, Beograd, Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1932.

Ragusa had around 60 consulates all over the Mediterranean, and so the Consulate of the Ragusan Republic existed in Manfredonia from 1442 until 1667.²⁴⁶

The republic or city-state of Ragusa,²⁴⁷ on the eastern shore of the Adriatic, after 150 years of Venetian supremacy,²⁴⁸ was an independent republic from 1358 until the time of Napoleon, and the year 1808. For almost half a millennium the Republic of Ragusa lived a peaceful life in the historical environment of wars, between the “dragon”²⁴⁹ from the east, and the “lion” from the west. Due to its geopolitical position, it had a very important political and economic role. As pointed out by Jorjo Tadić, Ragusa represented “the transitional port for Turkey”,²⁵⁰ as the road through Ragusa was known as the shortest one to get to Constantinople.

‘The other shore’ (*l'altra sponda*) or Esclavonia,²⁵¹ as it was called by the Venetians, consisted of Dalmatia, Venetian Albany, and Istria, which were under Venetian governance, and the Republic of Ragusa. It was mainly populated by Slavs who were Roman Catholics. Regarding the population, “in the first half of the sixteenth century the Republic had more than 50,000 inhabitants; in the second half of the sixteenth century, between 50 and 60 thousand”.²⁵² The sixteenth century witnessed the

²⁴⁶ Mentioned in Gabrielli, 2015, 177. She refers to the work by Ilija Mitić, “Prilog proučavanju odnosa Napuljske Kraljevine – Kraljevstva Dviju Sicilija i Dubrovačke republike od sredine XVII do početka XIX stoljeća”, *Radovi*, br. 19, Zagreb, 1986.

²⁴⁷ Ragusium was a Roman town, which was later developed into Ragusa. Regarding the name, first it was Raguseum, and then over centuries it was Romanised to Ragusa. From 1918, the city was given the name Dubrovnik, after the name of the river Dubrava (Dubrava after the tree: ‘dub’ – oak tree). Ragusa is also a name used for today’s Dubrovnik by foreigners. Throughout this study I will use the name in use today in Italian and English literature, Ragusa, although it is also possible to find the original name Dubrovnik, and the adjective Ragusan.

²⁴⁸ In 1358 by Višegrad agreement, signed by King Louis, Ragusa gained the autonomy, but formally needed to acknowledge the Hungarian sovereign.

²⁴⁹ The metaphor used in the literature, where the dragon refers to the Turks, and the lion to Venice. See Ivan Gundulić, *Osman*, ed. Ivan Mažuranić, Zagreb, Fr. Župan, 1887.

²⁵⁰ Tadić, 1939.

²⁵¹ During ‘the Golden Period’ of Ragusa the territory of the Republic extended from Klek-Neum in the north to Sutorina (Boka Kotorska) in the south and a few kilometres inland. It included the islands of Šipan, Lopud and Koločep (after 1080), Mljet (1141), Lastovo (1216), the town of Ston (1298) and the Pelješac Peninsula (1399). The coastal territory of the Republic without islands was approximately 120 kilometres in length.

²⁵² Nenad Vekarić, “The Population of the Ragusa Republic in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries”, *Dubrovnik Annals* 2, 1998, 7-28.

beginning of cultural and economic growth which lasted almost two centuries, until the devastating earthquake of 1667. In this ‘golden period’ of Ragusa’s history, Ragusa had merchant colonies all over Europe, from Constantinople to Budapest, as well as many Italian and French cities.²⁵³ This period was marked by peace, and although no significant rebellions occurred during this period, there were some personal acts of protest. The most famous is the case of Marino Darsa (Marin Držić), the most important and popular early modern playwright and prose writer from Ragusa, and the already-mentioned Marino Caboga.²⁵⁴

The motto of the republic of Ragusa, *non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro* (‘liberty is not well sold for all the gold’), is engraved above the entrance of St Lawrence Fortress in Ragusa. It says much about the pride of the people and the importance of their independence, not only during early modern period, but until today. However, the liberty had its own cost, according to Braudel’s statement that “the tenacious republic of St. Blaise²⁵⁵ played on its double status as protégé of the Papacy and vassal of the Sultan”.²⁵⁶ In order to maintain its privileged position between the Ottomans from the east and Venice from the west, from 1458, Ragusa needed to pay an annual tribute to the Ottomans, who in their turn granted a privileged position to Ragusans in their lands. That was the period known as *pax ottomana* or *pax turcica*, when everyone had coinciding interests: Venetians wanted to secure the route towards the inner Balkans, the Ottomans towards the Mediterranean, and the Ragusans to live wealthy and in peace.

²⁵³ Tadić, 1948, 326.

²⁵⁴ He went to Siena and became the vice-rector of the University in 1541. He wrote four letters to Cosimo I de’ Medici, asking him for support to fight against aristocratic government in Ragusa. These letters survive in the archive of Florence, and were discovered by the French historian Jean Dayre. See “Marin Držić conspirant ‘a Florence’”, *Revue des études slaves*, X, 76-80; *Dubrovačke studije*, 19-23. They were published for the first time by Rešetar in *Djela Marina Držića*, lxvi-lxxiv, cxxxi-cxlvii.

²⁵⁵ Saint Blaise is the protector of the city-state of Ragusa.

²⁵⁶ Braudel, 129.

There are a number of circumstances which should be taken into consideration when the position and importance of Ragusa is analysed. The geographical position of Ragusa made it an important port through which precious metals (silver and copper), as well as grain from Bosnia and Serbia, had to pass in order to be sold. Moreover, diplomatic relations with other countries were well organised, and executed by competent diplomats. It is important to add here that Catholicism was the predominant religion in the Republic of Ragusa, so Ragusans were loyal to the Papal crown. And finally, the Ragusan government was conservative and monopolized all power of the city-state, though they mainly copied Venetian rules. One example can be found in Nicolò Vito di Gozze's *Dello stato delle repubbliche*,²⁵⁷ where he wrote that in this part of the Adriatic Sea, what we have is the imitation of the glorious Venetian Republic. The structure of the government, with its two councils and senate, along with a Rector who was elected every month,²⁵⁸ was influenced by the Venetian one.

The Republic of Ragusa was strictly aristocratic. The population was divided into three classes: nobility (patricians), citizens, and artisans or plebeians, and all the power was maintained inside the circles of nobility. According to Zdenka Janeković-Römer, "Ragusan nobility practiced the strictest endogamy in Europe".²⁵⁹ Marriage between members of different social classes was strictly forbidden by law. According to a law passed in 1462, a nobleman who married a non-noble woman could not retain his noble status.²⁶⁰ Nobility had all the power; citizens could hold minor offices, while plebeians had no right to participate in governmental activity. Romer's observation that

²⁵⁷ Di Gozze, 1591.

²⁵⁸ See the second chapter of this thesis.

²⁵⁹ Zdenka Janeković-Römer, *Okvir slobode: dubrovačka vlastela između srednjovjekovlja i humanizma*, Zavod za povijesne znanosti, Zagreb, Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1999.

²⁶⁰ Vekarić, 2007, 342.

“power was concentrated in the hands of the 33 noble lineages”²⁶¹ is quite important. The six largest families, as pointed out by the same author, were: Di Gozze, Menze, Gondola, Sorgo, Georgio, and Di Bona. It is not surprising, then, that Di Gozze, Di Bona, and Gondola are the surnames of the writers presented in this thesis.²⁶²

Different travelogues appeared in the sixteenth century by Italian or French travellers to the eastern coast, creating an image of Ragusa for the western world, providing evidence and observation on many social customs at the time.²⁶³ Equally important is that from the late fifteenth century Ragusan historians started writing their own history.

From the fourteenth century, the education of boys was the responsibility of the Ragusan government,²⁶⁴ and girls did not have any right to education. Romer points out that:

Unlike some Italian cities, it was not customary to send girls to be educated in the nunneries before they were married. Daughters remained under their mother's surveillance until marriage, while sons came under their fathers' or the schools' rule as early as when they were five years old. Most girls were trained only in domestic skills, needlework and catechism.²⁶⁵

On the Italian Adriatic coast, although the education provided to women cannot be compared with that provided to men, girls could, in some places, receive an

²⁶¹ Zdenka Janeković-Römer, “Noble Women in Fifteenth-Century Ragusa”, *Women and Power in East Central Europe - Medieval and Modern*, ed. Marianne Sághy. East Central Europe, Special Issue, 20-23, 1, 1996, pp. 141-170.

²⁶² Janeković-Römer, 1996.

²⁶³ Such as those by Gioseppo Rosaccio (1598) or by French diplomats Jean Chesneau in 1546 and Pierre Lescapier in 1574.

²⁶⁴ One of the most important documents regarding education in Ragusa is *Provedimentum formatum super reformatione juventutis* (1558). This text decreed that noble sons must go to school until they were 20 years of age.

²⁶⁵ Janeković-Römer, 1996.

education and manage to go to school.²⁶⁶ This privilege was, however, strictly connected with class. At school, they would master humanist studies, work with private tutors, and consequently exchange letters, usually with male humanists.²⁶⁷

Regarding cultural activities, Italian influence was obvious, but not exclusive.

The civilization of the peninsula wove a brilliant, concentrated web along the east coast of the sea. This is not to suggest that Dalmatia was 'Italian' in the sense that apologists of racial expansion would have understood it. The entire seacoast of the *Retroterra* is today inhabited by a Slav population. And so it was in the sixteenth century in spite of superficial appearances. At Ragusa at the time, Italianism was a commodity: Italian was the commercial language of the entire Mediterranean.²⁶⁸

The literature and cultural activities in Ragusa had their own particularities, which were different from the Italian. On the one hand, the influence of Italian culture was obvious, but on the other it was dependent on the ideology of the city's governance, which, for example, inhibited the development of fictional prose, along with autobiography, memoir, and similar prose genres.²⁶⁹

And whereas the absence of the chivalric romances and novels might be explained by the fact that they were consumed by Ragusan public in Italian, the absence of literary genres which thematise individuality and subjectivity, connected with the self of the 'I', might be understood in line with the mode and relationship the government of Republic of Ragusa had towards the status of the

²⁶⁶ See Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1986, 29-57.

²⁶⁷ The first female scholars appeared at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Italy, among which were Cassandra Fedele (1465-1558), Olimpia Fulvia Morata (1526-1555), and Isabelle d'Este (1474-1539).

²⁶⁸ Braudel, 131-32.

²⁶⁹ Torbarina, 1931, 19-87; Tadić, 1939, 207.

individual, specifically and decidedly suppression and negation of any kind of self-assertion.²⁷⁰

Considering Italian literary influence, there exists one document which proves the existence of many influential Italian books available in Ragusa. The catalogue made by the Slavist Konstantin Jireček²⁷¹ represents very important material for analysing influences on Di Gozze/Gondola's writings. The list is from 1549, therefore thirty-five years before the analysed dedicatory epistle²⁷² appeared, and includes the work of Castiglione, Petrarch, Ariosto, Aretino, Piccolomini, and widely present and influential during the early modern period, Antonio de Guevara. Also, there are ten copies of Piccolomini's *Creaza delle donne*, six *Fiore de virtu*, four *Vita Marco Aurelio*, "4 Petrarchi [...], 2 Orlandi del Bernia [...], 13 Capitoli del Aretin [...], 6 Lacrime d'Angelica [...], 6 Valerio Max(imo) [...], 10 satire di Ariosto [...], 10 Creanze de le Done [...], 6 Fiore de virtu [...], 4 VitaAurelio [...], 4 Petrarcha velut [...], 8 L(ette)re Aldo [...], 6 Cortegian."²⁷³

Not only books, but people too were travelling, and many, as already seen, went from Ragusa to Italy, but also many Italians came to Ragusa. Given that a large number of professors came from Italy, mainly from Puglia, Milan, Florence, Napoli, Sicily, etc., as well as from other countries that were influenced by new developments in Italian culture, they also introduced more common use of Italian. A professor from Lucca,

²⁷⁰ Fališevac, 2007: "Tako se jasno može uočiti da u dubrovačkome renesansnom i baroknom književnom korpusu izostaju neki žanrovi reprezentativni za italijansku književnost 16. i 17. stoljeća. Prvo, u Dubrovniku se u ranome novovjekovlju nije razvila fiktionalna proza, a isto tako ni razni autobiografski, memoarski i slični prozni književni oblici. Pa dok se izostanak viteško – avanturističkih romana i novela može tumačiti činjenicom da je tu vrstu literature čitalačka publika Dubrovnika konzumirala na talijanskom jeziku, izostanak književnih oblika koji tematiziraju individualitet i subjektivitet, oblika vezanih za govor o vlastitome "ja", može se tumačiti modusom i odnosom dubrovačke vlasti prema statusu pojedinca, konkretno izrazitim suprimiranjem i negiranjem bilo kakva pokušaja isticanja individualnosti."

²⁷¹ Jireček, 511-515.

²⁷² Di Gozze, 1584.

²⁷³ Jireček, 511-515.

Philippus de Diversis, came to Ragusa in 1434, taught for ten years, wrote a very important description of the history of Ragusa, *Situs aedificorum, politiae et laudabilium consuetudinum inclitae civitatis Ragusii*, published for the first time in 1882. Also very influential were Camillo Camilli (around 1600), and the Portuguese Didacus Pyrrhus Lusitanus (1517–1599), who were professors of Nicolò Vito di Gozze, then Francesco Serdonati, Nascimbene Nascimbeni, and Gianbattista Amalteo. For cultural development in sixteenth century Ragusa, the archbishop from Bologna, Lodovico Beccadelli (1501–1572), was an important figure, whose letters are an important testimony to the Italian-Ragusan relationship.²⁷⁴

Francesco Sansovino in his book *Del Governo et Amministratione di diversi regni et repubbliche, così antiche come moderne*,²⁷⁵ mentions the fact that Ragusan priests speak only in the presence of men, because women do not understand the Italian language. In general, in the Republic of Ragusa and in all Dalmatia, there were three languages in use: Latin, Italian, and the Slavic language (“*slavica lingua*” or “*lingua sclavonica*”).²⁷⁶ Before the seventeenth century, women, regardless of the social class they belonged to, rarely knew any language apart from the Slavic language.²⁷⁷ Italian was the language of economic affairs, correspondence, and literature. Latin was originally the language of academia, but as some professors came from Italy

²⁷⁴ Torbarina, 1931.

²⁷⁵ Francesco Sansovino, *Del governo et amministratione di diversi regni et repubbliche, così antiche come moderne: libri XXI*, Venetia, Bertano, 1578. The fourteenth book is dedicated to the customs of Ragusa. In the original: “Conducono paramente ogn’anno un Predicator eccellente, il qual predica solamente a gli huomini, et questo perché predicando egli in lingua italiana, le donne non lo possono intendere, come quelle che non sanno la lingua”, 1578, 112r.

²⁷⁶ Bariša Krekić, “On the Latino-Slavic Cultural Symbiosis in Late Medieval and Renaissance Dalmatia and Dubrovnik”, paper presented at the conference *The Text and Texture of History: Modern Readings of Premodern Society and Culture, 600-1600*, Los Angeles, 1992, 323.

²⁷⁷ Apart from the languages already mentioned, French was also known in aristocratic circles. Regarding languages, comments of visitors from Venice are interesting. In 1553, an unknown Venetian visitor mentions that women speak only the Slavic language (“la lingua schiavona”), while men speak both Italian and Slavic. “Usano le donne la lingua schiavona, con la quale parlano li altri Dalmatini; ma li huomeni et questa et la italiana. La lingua loro natia e schiava, con la quale parlano li altri Dalmatini” (from Mahnken, 56, mentioned in Krekić, 1992, 327).

(influenced by new developments in Italian culture) they also introduced the common use of Italian. In Sansovino's words, every young boy knew Italian, called 'Franca' by Ragusans, but between themselves they only used their mother tongue.²⁷⁸

Slavonic was the spoken language, the familiar tongue of the women and the people, and, even, after all, of the elite, since the registers of Ragusa frequently record strict orders to speak only Italian at the assemblies of the Rectors; if an order was necessary, clearly Slavonic was being spoken.²⁷⁹

Ragusan administration was Roman, and Italian language took the place of Latin in administration. Officially to "the Slavic/Croatian surnames were given Romanised/Italianised forms [...] Italian language replaced Latin not only in administrative use, but soon became a successful elitist medium which found expression in the Italianisation of the Roman surnames".²⁸⁰

The first literary academy in Ragusa mentioned by later scholarship is the Accademia dei Concordi.²⁸¹ It was founded by Italian poet and humanist Giovanni Battista Amalteo and Ragusan poet Miho Monaldi. Its members gathered in the "Pallazzo Sponza" (today a historical archive). The main ideas the academy defended were stoicism and cosmopolitanism. Its members were brought together by the ideas of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism, as well as the Italian and Illyrian languages. It lasted until Monaldi's death in 1592. All our knowledge of this Academy comes from secondary sources. The membership of four women writers in the Accademia dei Concordi is often suggested by historiography, but it has never been definitively proved. At the same time, Ragusan writers were members of several Italian academies. Literary

²⁷⁸ Sansovino, 112r.

²⁷⁹ Braudel, 132.

²⁸⁰ Vekarić, 1997, 340.

²⁸¹ See Rafo Bogišić, "Akademija složnih (Dei Concordi) u Dubrovniku 16. stoljeća", *Croatica*, 24-25, Zagreb, 1986.

academies in Italy held a very important role in the education of elite men, and their number was rising to the point where they existed in almost every Italian city.

Unfortunately, just as with schools, their doors were open only to men. However, there were a few of them which offered official membership to women, such as the Accademia dei Sonnnacchiosi in Bologna, with Veronica Gambarà as its first female member.²⁸² Also, it can be proved that the Accademia degli Intronati in Siena accepted some women.

In Ragusa, the first trace of censorship attempting to weed out any trace of Lutheranism can be traced from 1545, when the Government prescribed a law that everyone possessing such books should be summoned for questioning. Later, in 1604, the Senate passed a law that every book, before being sent to print, must first pass the censorship of the Small Council.²⁸³ As pointed out by Fališevac, another controlling attitude by the authorities can be seen in the fact that it was only in 1783 that Carlo Occhi opened the first printing press in Ragusa. However, even then, all books needed to obtain permission from the government.²⁸⁴ Publishing centres for Ragusa and other parts of Dalmatia were primarily in Venice, but also in Rome, Ancon, Loreto, Padua, and Udine.

On the Italian peninsula, in 1542 Pope Paolo III introduced the Roman Inquisition and constitution *Licet ab Initio*, with the most repressive system of punishment. From then on, merely possessing a prohibited book would be punishable.

²⁸² Cox, 2016, 11.

²⁸³ Fališevac, 2007, 21-22: "Svaka i najmanja oporbena misao i ideja u kulturnome životu Dubrovnika sprečavala se strogom i sustavno provedenom cenzurom. Prva vijest o vladinoj cenzuri potječe iz 1545. godine kada je dubrovačko veliko vijeće donijelo odluku da crkvene vlasti pomno istraže tko u Dubrovniku ima "luteranskih knjiga", pa ako se takvih nadje, da se povede istraga i rezultati dostave vlastima kako bi krivci bili kažnjeni. Isto tako, sve biblioteke, knjižare i svi privatni ljubitelji knjiga bili su pod stalnom i strogom prismotrom. A 31. srpnja 1604. naredio je Senat svim Dubrovčanima koji bi htjeli tiskati bilo koje djelo da ga predaju na cenzuru Malome vijeću".

²⁸⁴ Fališevac, 2007, 23.

In Venice the obligation to hold a permit for printing was introduced in 1527.²⁸⁵ There were two authorities, the Church and the government. The first Roman index of prohibited books appeared in 1559.²⁸⁶ The index was divided into three classes: non-Catholic authors whose entire oeuvre was forbidden, Catholic authors whose selected writings were forbidden, and some titles written anonymously. Authors partially or completely censored were: Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Niccolo Macchiavelli, Rabelais, Erasmus, Aretino, Luigi Pulci, Giovanni della Casa, Ortensio Lando, Niccolo Franco, Francesco Berni, and vernacular translations of the Bible and the New Testament.²⁸⁷ The next Index appeared in 1564, possibly as the result of the last part of the Council of Trent, and was valid until 1596. In rigidity, it was similar to the previous one.

With the development of print, the reading public became much wider, and so did the number of writers. There is evidence that many books went to print without the agreement of the author (in the case of Castiglione), however, the topos of modesty makes such disclaiming of knowledge of publication rather ambiguous.

I hope that the first part of this chapter has provided answers to the questions of who wrote in defence of women in the sixteenth century in the Italian context, what kind of texts they wrote, and based on which doctrines. In order to understand the narrative of the three women authors I present in this study, it is important to realize how the ideas of womanhood and gender were developed, spread, and defended by men and a few women within the Italian context, and how they found their way to Ragusa and to other parts of the eastern shore of the Adriatic. The ideal picture of a woman included at least three important characteristics: chastity, silence, and constant submission. Definitions of women, always in relation to her body and men (virgin, wife,

²⁸⁵ Braidà, 108.

²⁸⁶ Braidà, 111.

²⁸⁷ Mentioned in Braidà, 112.

widow), are connected with the most important adjective: chaste. For the female figure, the treatises from the sixteenth century had two main functions, “to produce a model, and the institution of women”.²⁸⁸

Female authorship in Ragusa should be connected with female literature from the Italian context, and analysed together. By the second half of the sixteenth century, women’s writings were appearing in much larger numbers, and, more importantly for this study, the secular woman author/writer appeared who did not write poetry only, but also prose, and treated the topics of female defence and civic pride. Despite this progress, women in the sixteenth century were still relegated to the margins in virtually every domain of life. At the same time, within the existing systems and using the only possible strategies, women found ways to defend themselves, using the written and published word as their reaction against socially-imposed norms

In my analysis of important treatises, I have focused on four authors, two from Italy and two from Ragusa. *Il libro del Cortigiano* is presented in more in detail, being probably the most influential book in this genre from the sixteenth century. From the other side, Camerata’s work was selected as a direct influence on Gondola’s work, and as representative of the *querelle des femmes*. This book contains all the main arguments which it is possible to read in the literature of the *querelle des femmes*.

For the sake of clarity, I also want to geographically and chronologically localize my thesis, and to answer the question of where these women were writing. Every part of both shores of the Adriatic had its own characteristics, different social and historical patterns, and broad generalization is not possible. Because of this I have tried to provide the important historical, geopolitical, and cultural patterns in terms of the relationship Ragusa had with the Italian shore, especially two places from the western shore of the

²⁸⁸ Zancan, 13.

Adriatic, Manfredonia and Padua. I believe that this framework will be useful for situating the authors and their work, especially because civic pride and references to their homeland are more than obvious in their writings. This overview of the socio-cultural context in which specific texts appeared, I treat as a text in its own right, inscribed in women's writing; all the information we have about the socio-cultural context tells us about the possibilities women had for writing, and the ways in which they wrote.

CHAPTER 2: MARIA GONDOLA

Maria Gondola,²⁸⁹ can also be found in the archival documents under the names Maruscia and Mara and the surname Gondola. Her second surname was Di Gozze, after she was married to Nicolò Vito di Gozze.²⁹⁰ Archives yield only scarce facts about her life; what we know is that she was born around 1557,²⁹¹ and that Nicolò di Gozze concluded the marital agreement on 3rd December 1575. They had a son named Vido (Vid/Vito) Gučetić, who died in Ancon only two years after his father's death, on 5th February 1612.²⁹² Maria's name was also mentioned in a manuscript of private family records on daily work and business, by the Pozzi family, titled "Amministrazione Niccolo e Maruscia di Gozze",²⁹³ but apart from the cover, her name does not appear anywhere else in the manuscript. Until recently it was thought that it belonged to Maria and her husband, but the latest research, by Janeković-Römer, proves that the notebook belonged to the Pozzi family, and it is not clear why Di Gozze's name is mentioned.²⁹⁴ Other archival data, apart from the marital agreement, include the amount of the dowry and the birth of their son. It is important to add that her family of origin – Gondola – was one of the richest and most influential noble families; this family gave many writers and prominent figures to the political and social life of early modern Ragusa.

²⁸⁹ It is possible to find her name in the list made by Cox, 2011, 261: "Gondola Maria (Marija Gundulić), Ragusa (Ragusa), Dalmatia (Croatia). Daughter of Italophilic erudite Ivan Gundulic (1507-85). Married philosopher and literato Niccolò Vito di Gozze (Nikola Vitov Gučetić). Published work: letter to Fiore Zuzzori (Cvijeta Zuzorić) in Vito di Gozze, 1585; unnumbered but *2r-**4r. Interlocutor (with Zuzori) in: Vito di Gozze 1581. Bibliography: Torbarina, 1931, 73-74; Rabitti 2002, 420; Romer 2004".

²⁹⁰ On Nicolò Vito di Gozze, see below.

²⁹¹ Vekarić, 2013, 121.

²⁹² Miroslav Pantić, "I Bobali ed i Gozzi da Ragusa e l'Italia nel seicento", *Barocco in Italia e nei Paesi slavi del sud*, ed. Vittore Branca and Sante Graciotti, Firenze, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1983, pp. 107-130, here 126.

²⁹³ HAD, Privata, XIX, Vol.10 XIX, Amministrazione Nicolò e Maruscia di Gozze (1569–1599).

²⁹⁴ Zdenka Janeković-Römer: "The Family Records of Andreas de Pozza from 1569–1603" *Dubrovnik Annals 13* (2009), pp. 37-54, available at: hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=74540 Accessed 15 December 2014.

On the other hand, Maria Gondola's name is found twice in texts belonging to the corpus of sixteenth-century Ragusan literature written in Italian. She first appears as one of two female interlocutors in *Dialoghi*, 1581, written by her husband Nicolò Vito di Gozze. Three years later, Maria Gondola's name appeared in print at the end of her dedicatory epistle, as the author-dedicator to the book *Discorsi*, 1584. This book was republished in 1585, and for centuries the first edition has not been mentioned. Both books were written by Nicolò Vito di Gozze, a philosopher, statesman, and writer, "the greatest Ragusan eclectic and compiler",²⁹⁵ the husband of Maria Gondola.

2.1 Nicolò Vito di Gozze's dialogues (1581) as the pretext to the only signed text by Maria Gondola

Nicolò Vito di Gozze²⁹⁶ (1549–1610) was a philosopher, politician, and writer, who lived and got his education in Ragusa. He wrote in Latin and Italian, and published his books in Venice at the printing press of Aldus Manutius and Francesco Ziletti. It is not clear how much time he spent in Italy, but he stated that he was in Rome in 1575. The confusion within the scholarship regarding his stay in Italy was provoked by the statement in the letter to the readers in his book *Dello stato delle repubbliche*,²⁹⁷ where it is written that he saw neither Padua nor Bologna, but all his knowledge was gained at

²⁹⁵ Slobodan Prosperov Novak, *Vježbanje renesanse. Predavanja iz književnosti na sveučilištu Yale*, Zagreb, Algoritam, 2008, 180-184. Novak points out the non-originality of some of di Gozze's work, naming his method a "perfect and masked compilation", 2008, 181. He suggests that in *Dialogo della bellezza e Dialogo dell'amore secondo la mente di Platone* (1581), Di Gozze was compiling the work of philosopher Agostino Nifo (1469–1538) using the ideas from his book *De pulchro et amore* (1531).

²⁹⁶ He was one of the students of Nascimbene Nascimbeni, Italian humanist and man of vast culture, in Ragusa. When signing his books written in Italian, he mentioned his noble origin ("gentilhuomo raguseo") and later his belonging to the academic circle, the Academy of Occulti as "accademico occulto". In Latin he signed himself "Nicolaus Viti Gozzius patrius Reipublicae Ragusinae". For the catalogue of his books in Italian archives and libraries, see: edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web_iccu/MAIN.htm (accessed 7 January 2015). See also the manuscript of his unpublished book, Nicolò Vito di Gozze, *Li discorsi della immortalità e felicità humana composti per messer Nicolò Vito di Gozzi, gentilhuomo raguseo, accademico occulto* (1604), with the dedicatory epistle "Alla serenissima signora D. Livia della Rovere, duchessa d'Urbino, mia signora colendissima". The book is mentioned in Pantić, 1983, 120.

²⁹⁷ Di Gozze, 1591.

home.²⁹⁸ This mention of the two most prestigious universities is an important testimony about the places where Ragusans would go to study. He was proclaimed Doctor of Philosophy in the Vatican. However, his stay in Padua cannot be proved.²⁹⁹ Apart from his writing activity, and membership in the *Accademia dei Concordi* in Ragusa,³⁰⁰ and in the Italian *Accademia degli Insensati di Perugia*,³⁰¹ he was elected seven times rector of Ragusa (the rectorship lasted one month), and also had an important role in trade and finances.³⁰²

The first book Di Gozze published in Italian, *Dialogo della Bellezza detto Antos e Dialogo dell'amore detto Antos secondo la mente di Platone* (1581), is dedicated to Fiore Zuzzori's sister Nika Zuzzori, and organised as a dialogue with two female interlocutors, namely his wife Maria Gondola and Fiore Zuzzori. On the frontispiece of this book it is written that it is "republished"³⁰³ but so far the previous edition has not been traced. The importance of this book can be found in its value as a "corrective resource"³⁰⁴ rather than in the main ideas, mainly compiled from the work of Italian philosophers.³⁰⁵ Writing about dialogues with women as interlocutors, Cox observes:

These dialogues have a special interest, in that they offer us speech portraits of actual contemporary women – stylized portraits, of course, but portraits nonetheless, capable of telling us how given historical women might plausibly have been imagined as speaking on given occasions. This is a valuable

²⁹⁸ Di Gozze, 1591, 447: "Benignissimi Lettori, se in questi Ragionamenti dello Stato delle Rep. non arriverà l'autore per avventura ove desiderano gli elevati ingegni vostri, l'iscusarete, havendo questa consideratione; che egli non mai vide le mura di Padoua, ne di Bologna, ne d'alcun altro studio famoso della sua patria, fondata sopra un alto lido del mare, et sotto l'aspro Monte di Vargato; perché più di meraviglia, che di riprensione degno doverà sempre essere stimato, havendo egli acquistato questa cognitione più in casa, con la propria industria, senza precettore, che fuori con l'aiuto altrui".

²⁹⁹ See Chapter 3.

³⁰⁰ See Chapter 1.

³⁰¹ Pantić, 120.

³⁰² On Di Gozze see: Ljerka Schiffler, *Nikola Vitov Gučetić*, 2, dopunjeno izd., Zagreb, Hrvatski Studiji, 2007.

³⁰³ In the original: "Novamente posto in luce."

³⁰⁴ I borrow the notion from Cox, 2013, 53-78.

³⁰⁵ Novak, 2008.

corrective resource [...] Dialogues tell a different story, a more nuanced story, one in which speech norms are infected by social status, by local custom, by age, by context, by subject matter, in ways it would be difficult to predict from the normative text.³⁰⁶

On the Italian peninsula, the writing of dialogues with female interlocutors was a rather common practice during the early modern period. Cox has given a number, which should not be taken as definitive, of “fifty-nine Italian dialogues featuring female speakers produced between 1437 and 1628”.³⁰⁷ However, the development of this kind of genre had its peak in the sixteenth century; from Castiglione’s *Il libro del Cortegiano* (1528) and Bembo’s *Asolani* (1505) onwards, dialogues including real-life female speakers started to develop, and topics on love, beauty, the dignity of women, honour, and religious dialogues were the most common. Usually, in the Italian context, the setting for the dialogues was the court, but it could also be villas or gardens. In the case of Di Gozze, as the court was not part of Ragusan reality, the setting was the garden in front of the villa in Trsteno.³⁰⁸ As is pointed out in the same title, the *Dialogues* are based on Platonic thought, mainly quoting parts from the *Symposium*, but also from *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*.³⁰⁹ Apart from the authorities invoked directly by Di Gozze we

³⁰⁶ Virginia Cox, “The Female Voice in Italian Renaissance Dialogue”, *MLN*, 128/1, 2013, pp. 53-78, here 54.

³⁰⁷ Cox, “The Female Voice in Italian Renaissance Dialogue”, 2013, 53.

³⁰⁸ Di Gozze, 1581, 2: “sotto quella bella felice appresso quel ruscello di limpida acqua”. The *locus amoneus* of these dialogues, as well as of *Discorsi* and *Governo della famiglia* (1589), is Gozze’s garden and villa in Trsteno (It. Cannosa). In this village, 20km from Ragusa, Di Gozze family had had a land since 1494. Today, a famous arboretum there is open for tourists. With a small stream, near the sea, and surrounded by splendid nature, it was an ideal place, “under the tree and by the bank of a river”, where Di Gozze set his main discussion and wrote most of his books. When signing the dedication to *Governo della famiglia*, Di Gozze wrote that he did it from the villa, like one which existed in the time of Arcadia, “Di Villa non meno da quella, che in Arcadia fu anticamente”. About the Di Gozze family and their life in Trsteno in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Josip Lučić, *Gozze – Gučetići i Trsteno u XV i XVI stoljeću*, Dubrovnik, Hrvatska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti, 1995.

³⁰⁹ A partial translation into Latin of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* by Bruni appeared in Italy in 1424 and 1435. Later, Marsilio Ficino, mainly reworking Bruni’s translations, “wanted to make his translations as accurate and clear as possible, which meant employing an unadorned Latin and not avoiding useful philosophical terms just because they were unclassical or non-Ciceronian [...] [his] version remained the

also find Marsilio Ficino, Plotinus's ideas and Neoplatonism, and there is frequent allusion to Dante ("Poeta Toscano") and Petrarch (especially his *Triumph of Love*).

In dialogues on both love and beauty, the rhetoric inherited from Neoplatonist philosophy is obvious. The ideas of beauty, the invoked authorities, and virtue opposed to envy are all topoi which will later appear in the dedicatory epistle signed by Maria Gondola. Beauty as the logical cause of love was mainly understood in a broad sense in early modern treatises. In Di Gozze's dialogues, but also in the Gondola epistle, the beauty of the body connected with the beauty of the soul is mirrored in one person – Fiore Zuzzori, who becomes here an example of perfection. The Neoplatonic ideas of true friendship, connected with true love, dominate in both texts.

In the words given to Fiore in the *Dialogo della bellezza*: "greater love than ours, nor greater friendship it is impossible to find, and I believe that another similar one cannot be ever found in the female sex under this sun."³¹⁰ Additionally, the idea of honest friendship (which can only be broken by death) appears; it can be seen in Gondola's words that she fears Fiore will leave the place where she resides at the moment, that is, Ragusa. This clearly echoes a passage in the *Dialogo dell'amore* where Maria tells Fiore that sometimes her heart has a premonition of a grim future, and if Fiore happened to leave Ragusa, she would prefer death and would pray to God to take her life. Fiore answers that she could not live without her dear "Gondolina" either, and that she too would prefer them to die together:

if you depart from the City with your husband to live elsewhere, your departure would be the last step of my life; because of that I pray to the Majesty of God, to

standard Latin translation of Plato until the nineteenth century". See *Routledge History of Philosophy*, Volume IV, New York, Routledge, 1999, 27-33.

³¹⁰ Di Gozze, 1581, 24: "Non lo dirà alcuno, perché maggior amore del nostro, né maggior amicitia della nostra non si può trovare, ne crederò ch'altro simile giamai si troverà nel sesso femminile fra quanto gira il SOLE".

grant us, because of his goodness, this special grace, before seeing your departure, to close my eyes with everlasting dream.³¹¹

The method of comparing the nature of love with friendship was one of the favourite methods in the early modern literature influenced by Neoplatonism,³¹² and I believe that, in that line, the literary representation of the perfect friendship between Gondola and Zuzzori should be understood. The ideal friendship, in Neoplatonic terms, “demands equality of age, condition, fortune, confidence. It must be reciprocal and known”.³¹³ But the ideal friendship was thought to be possible only between men, never between a man and a woman, and only in some rare cases between women. Such an emblematic case of female friendship can be found in Piccolomini’s dialogues, *Il Dialogo della bella creanza delle donne, o Raffaella* (1539), a book which is known to have existed in Ragusa when Gondola and Di Gozze wrote, and which was doubtlessly one they were both influenced by.

Another typical feature that it is possible to find in philosophical treatises is the topos of departure. The conversation continues and Gondola compares her life without Fiore to hell, confirming that without her she could not continue living. Fiore, on her part, also concludes that without Maria and their sweet conversation, she could not live, adding the same ideas which we find later in Gondola’s writings: “but let’s pray to God, who has natural goodness, to grant us this grace (because more I do not want to have) that from this world to the other we can leave together”.³¹⁴ These ideas of the

³¹¹ Di Gozze, 1581, 24v: “se voi partite dalla Città col vostro marito per andar’ ad abitar altrove, la vostra partenza sarebbe l’ultimo passo della mia vita; però prego la Maestà di Dio, che mi conceda per sua bontà questa special gratia innanzi che io vegga la partenza vostra, mi chiuda gli occhi con sempiterno sonno”.

³¹² Kelso, 139-40.

³¹³ Kelso, 140.

³¹⁴ Di Gozze, 1581, 25r: “hor non mi dite dunque, che io resti in vita senza di voi, ma preghiamo la sua Maestà, che per sua natural bontà ci conceda questa gratia (perché maggior non desidero havere) che possiamo da questo mondo all’altro insieme insieme partire. M. Oh, se questa gratia la sua bontà ci concedesse, crederei che maggior dono non habbia concesso a due, ch’in amore siano stati congiunti; perché quando mi sovviene nell’animo, che voi poteste partire della città, et che io di voi restassi priva, non lo fo senza le lagrime giamai. Ma lasciamo questo, ch’è chiaro”.

inseparability of friends are found mainly in Neoplatonic philosophy. The love between two friends mirrors the love for God, and as such it represents the highest value one person can aspire for. This is the basis of Platonic love, as explained by Marsilio Ficino. That kind of love is “always honest and useful. It seeks virtue for the sake of the friend and is therefore more attached to the soul than the body, and can exist only between the good”.³¹⁵ Consequently, those who love each other search for beauty, and by beauty, are connected.³¹⁶

At the end of the dialogues on love, there is a discussion about ‘envy’. Traditionally connected to women, like other negative characteristics such as inconstancy, talkativeness, and so on, envy can be traced from Aristotle onwards³¹⁷ as a dominant characteristic in women. In one sentence, attributed to Maria, it is mentioned that the bad tongues of mean women from the lower social class say bad things about every gentle person, “because they think that they do not have equals in courteousness and wisdom of the soul, and that without study, but around cliffs and kitchen they acquired every right to condemn everyone.”³¹⁸ As will be shown later, envy became the main reason for Zuzzori’s departure, as explained in the dedicatory epistle by Gondola. Among the other rhetorical strategies, the importance of the onomastic and the connection between names and the authority of etymology is obvious. The importance of the name Fiore is described by the interlocutor Maria: “you, named Flower for your beauty, and whose name corresponds to nature.”³¹⁹ The same explanation exists in the dedicatory epistle, as well as in Camerata’s book (1567).

³¹⁵ Kelso, 1978, 140.

³¹⁶ Ficino, 151: “[amore] è appetito di generare nel subiecto bello per conservare la vita nelle mortali cose perpetua: questo è l’amore degl’uomini viventi in terra, questo è il fine di nostro amore”.

³¹⁷ See Chapter 1.

³¹⁸ Di Gozze, 1581, 27: “onde le cattive lingue di quelle vil femine, che voi sapete, si muovono a dir male d’ogni gentil persona; perché si credono loro non haver pari nella gentilezza et saviezza d’animo, et che senza alcun studio, ma intorno la rocca, et la cucina avessero acquistato ogni valore per biasimar altrui”.

³¹⁹ Di Gozze, 1581, 1: “voi che sete nominata Fiore di bellezza, et nella quale il nome alla natura corrisponde”.

To prove female superiority some exempla of women from Ragusa are present, and their praise is based on the Neoplatonic idea that the beauty of their body is inseparably connected with the beauty of their soul. However, this involves exposing them to the male eye. Women are observed and the beauty of their body becomes a mirror to their inner value, which becomes more problematic as their inner worth is materially visible in their outside appearance. Apart from the contemporary exempla (Fiore Sciumicich, Margherita di Menze, Paula de' Gradi), exemplary women from the past are mentioned, among them "gentildonne Romane" who were educated, such as Hortensia, Martia, Cornelia, Giulia,³²⁰ and two women connected with the greatest poets from the past, Petrarch's Laura, and Dante's Beatrice.³²¹ The choice is made in connection with the authorities from past, confirming the authoritative knowledge produced by men. In the same text we find both poetical muses and women warriors.

2.2 Dedicatory epistle by Di Gozze: "To the very magnificent and very respectful my lady Nika Zuzori in Ancon"³²² in *Dialogo della Bellezza* (1581)

The three-page long (without numeration) dedicatory epistle of the book of dialogues, addressed to Nika Zuzzori, who at the time it was written lived in Ancon, is signed "to your majesty profoundly attached Nicolò Vito di Gozzi". The date is 1st of April 1581, and the place is Ragusa. At the very beginning the dedicator, Di Gozze explains how he chose the dedicatee and why the dedication is important, writing "and because it was always the custom, anyone who wanted to make any of his works public, to show to the world the flowers and the fruits of his genius, would often dedicate it to the person he

³²⁰ Di Gozze, 1581, 37.

³²¹ Di Gozze, 1581, 29.

³²²Di Gozze, 1581: "Alla molto mag.ca signora mia osservandissima Nika Zuzzori, in Ancona".

loved with the greatest love, or because of some other worthy cause.”³²³ The private dedicatee, to use Genette’s terminology,³²⁴ of this dedicatory epistle is Nika Zuzzori – the sister of Fiore Zuzzori, loved and respected by Di Gozze, not only because of her qualities, but also for “the close friendship she has with my beloved consort, with her more than any other”.³²⁵ He begins with the common topoi of enumerating female virtues, and commenting on their current scarcity, explaining:

there are many virtues, which with a bright light distinguished none less the antique, than the modern women, my very Magnificent Lady, among them your gentle sister Fiore, not less because of the beauty of her body and chastity of her soul, but rather for many other virtues which today it is rare to find in women in the world.³²⁶

Di Gozze continues and gives us a clear explanation for his decision to choose Nika. Firstly, in line with Neoplatonic ideals, Nika has similar qualities as her sister, being “the worthy sister of such a flower to whom you are related not less by the nobility of the blood than by the beauty of the body, and the prudence of the soul.”³²⁷ The noun ‘flower’ appears in the title of the *Dialoghi*, where beauty and love are connected with the Greek name for flower, ‘antos’.³²⁸ According to historical/archival

³²³ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “Et perchè fu sempre costume, che chiunque voleva mandar in luce qualche sua opera, per mostrar al mondo i fiori e frutti del suo ingegno, il più delle volte quella dedicava alla persona alla quale maggior amor portasse, ovvero per qualche altra causa degna”.

³²⁴ Genette, 131. Genette distinguishes two types of dedicatees: private and public. “By private dedicatee I mean a person, known to the public or not, to whom a work is dedicated in the name of a personal relationship, or other [...] The public dedicatee is a person who is more or less well known but with whom the author, by his dedication, indicates a relationship that is public in nature – intellectual, artistic, political, or other”.

³²⁵ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “oltre che la stretta amicitia, la quale ella tiene con la mia diletta consorte, più che con nessun’altra.”

³²⁶ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “Molte sono le virtù, le quali col chiaro lume hanno illustrato non meno le antiche, che le moderne donne, molto magnifica signora mia, fra le quali Vostra gentil sorella Fiore, non men per la bellezza del corpo e casità dell’animo, che per molte altre virtù che sono hoggidi rare nelle donne al mondo”.

³²⁷ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “prima per essere lei quella degna sorella d’un tanto fiore, à cui non meno è congiunta nella nobiltà del sangue, che nella bellezza del corpo, et nella prudenza dell’animo”.

³²⁸ The translation into English of the book title would be *Dialogue of Beauty so-called Antos and Dialogue on Love so-called Antos*.

sources, the Zuzzori family did not have noble origins; rather, Fiore entered the circles of nobility by marrying Pescioni.³²⁹ The second reason for the choice of dedicatee is the fact that both sisters lived together, and Nika should be the person who knows Fiore better than anyone else, “she being the one who was nourished and grew with Your Ladyship, nobody else could know her better than you.”³³⁰

Owing to these reasons, all ultimately and tightly connected with its real dedicatee, Fiore Zuzzori, Di Gozze used the person of Nika as a Dantean ‘*donna schermo*’, the woman to whom he publicly gives all attention, but in fact the real subject to whom he dedicates his work is the other. Why does he decide to use this technique of dissimulation, rather than dedicating it openly to Fiore? One of the explanations could be that as Fiore is one of the interlocutors, it was not appropriate to dedicate the book to her, and thus the author strategically chose to “accommodate other messages besides praise for the dedicatee.”³³¹ That is, the praise of different person. In fact, it might be suggested that Di Gozze wanted once again to praise the qualities of the woman who should be the best reader of his work because of her virtues, and around whose name different strategies can be deployed. The idea that Fiore is the best reader of the work is also present in the dedicatory epistle by Gondola.

Qualities praised in Fiore in this dedicatory epistle are also the same qualities praised in women in general at the time, so Fiore becomes the contemporary example which other women should follow. The proof of her virtue can be found in the connection of “beauty of body and chastity of the soul”,³³² as she was adorned by God with a divine beauty and virtue of soul, so that she might not only be compared with

³²⁹ See the last part of this chapter.

³³⁰ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “Perché sendo ella con V.S. nodrita e cresciuta, da nessuno meglio che da lei puo essere conosciuta; onde crederò ch’ella prenderà maggior piacere d’alcun altre, leggendo quei medesimi ragionamenti, ch’ella altre volte con la mia diletta consorte fece in villa”.

³³¹ As explained by Genette, 117.

³³² Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “bellezza del corpo et castità dell’animo”.

worthy women from classical and modern times, but rather that she went “several steps ahead them.”³³³ She is represented as “the divine thing”, and poetically described by Di Gozze as a woman “whose gifts (dowry) of beauty and honesty, like gracious and honest sisters [...] are united.”³³⁴ This familial comparison between beauty and honesty, its alluding to the relation between two sisters, might be one more reason why Di Gozze dedicated the book to the sister of one of the interlocutors.

Subsequently, he also gives an explanation, or in Genette’s words a “statement of intent”,³³⁵ for the novelty of introducing two women into a dialogue, which should be understood as a way of giving importance to the originality of one’s *negotium*. The explanation and justification of his work, and the fact that he introduced two women in the dialogues, leads us toward the topos of utility. According to Dunn, “utility becomes the tool for [...] the justification for the present endeavour”.³³⁶

Now if it looks new to somebody that I have introduced two women and made in this way Platonic Dialogues, that somebody should excuse me, taking into consideration reasons which made me do so; he will realize that I did so in order to satisfy partially the wish that I have to celebrate these two Women as much as I can, as I love and honour them more than any other person in the world.³³⁷

He introduces his act of justification by claiming first a private reason which in turn prompted the author to the public act of speech, which must be useful. He then

³³³ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “ella ne può (senza alcuna adulazione, la qual schivo come la peste) andare non che à pari dell’altre, ma qualche grado innanzi.”

³³⁴ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “essendo che come cosa divina [...] col fregio di chiarissima honestà, sommo ornamento delle donne, ella si trova perfettamente ornata, le quali, doti della bellezza et honestà, come graziose et honeste sorelle, nella vostra sorella, insieme insieme [*sic*] sono congiunte.”

³³⁵ Genette, 221.

³³⁶ Dunn, 5.

³³⁷ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “Hora se à qualch’uno parrà nuovo, ch’io abbia introdotto due donne in sì fatti Dialogi Platonici, quel tale anco m’haverà per iscusato, se havendo riguardo alla cagione che à cio mi ha mosso: troverà ch’io l’ho fatto per sodisfar in parte all’intenso mio de desiderio, che ho di celebrare queste donne quanto maggiormente posso, amandole io; et honorandole più ch’altra persona del mondo”.

continues, and the private gratification goes to the public act of the usefulness of his work. First, he explains that ‘beauty’ and ‘love’ are qualities more present in women than in men, and adds that, in the case of the two interlocutors, as nature was more gracious and liberal to decorate them with those qualities, it is then logical that they better than anybody else could discuss those qualities which are best seen in them. These two women can speak about these topics, being by God adorned by virtues which “make our spirits perfect”, therefore they can understand the concepts of beauty and love better than anyone else. Di Gozze went further, adding that he is surprised that there were still those who consider that the female sex “is so shameful and so despicable and not worthy to be introduced to discuss about virtues”,³³⁸ explaining that women can speak about philosophical and scientific matters better than men.

The authorities he invokes are Aristotle and Plato, as well as “natural reasoning”, and therefore common sense, which was a common authority in the early modern period. Common reasoning is connected with the *lex naturae*. In Dunn’s words, “The writer’s primary rhetorical concern in such a system is to demonstrate that he or she possesses common sense, that he or she represent the audience.”³³⁹ Dunn goes further, quoting Hobbes, explaining that “rhetoric must be *representative* as well as *ethical* – that is, it must demonstrate the author’s adherence to common sense rather than merely dramatize his personal quest to enter into canons of textual authority”.³⁴⁰

However, common sense is also to heed the authority of Aristotle, Plato, and Hippocrates. Consequently, humoral theory is also used in this dedicatory epistle to prove the statement that if women are not equal to men, then they are superior. Di

³³⁸ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “onde molto mi fanno meravigliare coloro che stimano il sesso femminile essere tanto abietto et tanto vile, che non sia degno d’esser introdotto à ragionare delle virtù che fanno gli animi nostri perfetti”.

³³⁹ Dunn, 9.

³⁴⁰ Dunn, 16.

Gozze writes: “if we want to believe in the authority of Aristotle and Plato” and also the “immortal doctors” (suggesting with this opening that it is impossible not to believe them), we should conclude that:

women are more apt than men in learning every science, because all our consciousness comes from the sense, and as they are closer to the temperature, according to skilled doctors, they also have more temperate sense; from this it comes that their intellect is more perfect than ours, which shows that they are superior to men in learning letters and in dealing with contemplative virtues.³⁴¹

This statement, however, does not come from Aristotle’s work, as Aristotle’s main ideas regarding women were imperfection of the body and cold temperature (as explained in Chapter 1), and the coldness of the female body was one of the arguments used to prove female inferiority. In this dedicatory epistle, the opposite opinion inherited from “immortal doctors” is taken as true. The idea that women’s body temperature was hot is present in Hippocratic writings³⁴² and was accepted by some early modern writers. As concluded by King, the humoral theory had two interpretations: first, in Plutarch’s *Moralia*, it was explained that women’s temperature is hotter than men’s; the other interpretation is that found in Aristotle’s work. However, Gondola, in her dedicatory epistle, written only one year after this text by her husband, accepted that women’s temperature is closer to the humidity, as explained by Aristotle.

As bodily weakness was frequently charged against women as a proof of female intellectual inferiority (a belief whose roots could be found in Christian doctrine), Di Gozze also addresses that argument, turning it (as was common for early modern

³⁴¹ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “per esser’ elle più vicine alla temperatura, come vogliono i più periti Medici, hanno anco senso più temperato; seguita però che l’itelletto loro sia anco del nostro più perfetto; il che mostra, che elle siano superiori a gli huomini nel poter’imaparar lettere, et attender’ alle virtù contemplative”.

³⁴² King, 1993.

defenders of women's rights) "from reproaches to advantages".³⁴³ Di Gozze writes that the perfection of female bodies, as already seen in Neoplatonic philosophy, should be taken as proof of their superiority. Introducing men's aptness to weapons and military service in order to explain why men are considered superior, he concludes that:

Now, if it is said, that the man is superior to woman, that happens because he is apter to arms and military service, being stronger, more courageous, more apt to trade, and commerce, and to those studies of letters which are directed to the action and because of that being capable to sustain more difficulties, and also those difficulties which occur during study, as well as those in the other matters, is the reason why men gave themselves majority, and reduced women's work to the servile arts, almost invidious because of their perfection, what if we approve their opinion in this matter, it cannot be approved that women could not be inclined to learn all excellent disciplines of intellect.³⁴⁴

The concept of "servile arts", as pointed out by Umberto Eco,³⁴⁵ can be traced to Aristotle's *Politics*, which was later accepted by Thomas Aquinas, who considers all manual works in some way servile, "the manual arts *sunt quodammodo serviles*", meanwhile the liberal arts are superior and connected with the intellect.

Close textual analysis of this dedicatory epistle shows almost the same structure and topoi as used in Gondola's text, as well as the other main devices present in dedicatory epistles.³⁴⁶ Tropes of self-effacement from Cicero and *Rhetorica ad*

³⁴³ Genette, 16.

³⁴⁴ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: "Ora, se vien detto che l'uomo sia superiore alle donne, ciò avviene, perch'egli è più atto alle armi, et alla militia, sendo più forte, più animoso, et più atto alli negozii, et alle mercantie, et a questi studii di lettere che sono rivolti alle attioni, et perciò potendo egli sostener più fatiche, sì quelle che si sopportano nello studio, come quelle che si sopportano negli altri negozii, però questa è stata la cagione che gli huomini si sono usurpati la maggioranza, et hanno ridotte le donne ad arti servili, quasi invidiosi della perfetione loro; che se in questo gli si cede, non si cede però ch'elle non possano essere più disposte ad apprendere tutte le eccellenti discipline dell'intelletto; per il che stanno queste cose vere, come in effetto stanno."

³⁴⁵ Eco, 138.

³⁴⁶ Terzoli, 2010.

Herennum were very popular in the early modern period and were used in the topos of modesty. The opening of the dedicatory epistle follows the rules of the ‘*ars dicendi*’. Insisting on the truthfulness of his discourse, Di Gozze gives powerful comparisons, such as “without any adulation, which I avoid as a plague.”³⁴⁷ In order to celebrate Fiore’s beauty, he will use “rough style”,³⁴⁸ as he is “of low genius”³⁴⁹ and it is not appropriate to speak about such “high matters”.³⁵⁰ He writes: “Because of that I would like to believe, that in my daring there is no crime, when affection is such that it exceeds intelligence, which being incapable to do what it should do, it does what it can.”³⁵¹

The topos of modesty, therefore, becomes one of the most important strategies to convince the reader of the truthfulness of the written word. “As Quintilian sees, the more effective a speaker’s self-abnegation, the more seriously the listener will take his words on a subject, since he has made his own motivation invisible.”³⁵² On the other hand, the metaphor utilized by the author, the representation of the book as the “flowers and fruits of his genius”³⁵³, might be understood as a strategy emphasising the author’s diligence. In Maria Gondola’s epistle, the phrase “the fatigue of my husband”,³⁵⁴ functions in a similar way as trying to emphasize his diligence, rather than natural gift.

The mediatory function of this dedicatory epistle serves “to link his own image and that of the work, which the author (becoming in a way the book’s promoter) wants to be delivered to the future public”.³⁵⁵ The last sentence of the dedication becomes therefore a kind of special eulogy, as the author offers his work as a present (for which

³⁴⁷ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “senz’alcuna adulatione, la qual scivo comme la peste”.

³⁴⁸ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “rozzo stile”.

³⁴⁹ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “basso ingegno”.

³⁵⁰ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “alta materia”.

³⁵¹ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “Per il che crederò, che nell’ardir mio non sarà tanta colpa, se l’affettione è tale, che supera l’ingegno, il quale non potendo fare quanto debbe, farà quanto può”.

³⁵² Dunn, 6.

³⁵³ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “i fiori e frutti del suo ingegno”.

³⁵⁴ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: “la fatica del mio marito”.

³⁵⁵ Terzoli, 156: “servono a fissare l’immagine di se’ e della propria opera che l’autore (o chi se ne fa in qualche modo promotore) vuole consegnare ai futuri lettori”.

the noun ‘effort’ is used, again just as it occurs in Gondola’s dedicatory epistle) to Fiore’s sister, saying that, in fact, this is not his work, but Fiore’s: “Whereas Your Ladyship will make me special favour, to accept this my effort (rather not mine, but of your gentile Fiore), together with my soul, always ready to serve you, and by reading it, supply with the perfection of your ingenuity where I may have missed something”.³⁵⁶

This represents, in the words of Alessandra Vila, the semi-paradoxical topos,

on which basis the dedicatee is celebrated as the potential author of the book, which usually appears in the text’s instructions [...] To the dedicatee is attributed a gratifying omniscience in the matter, which makes him, more than reader and the benefactor of the instructions addressed to him, the model from whom the author learnt everything.³⁵⁷

This strategy, I believe, should be understood as one more piece of authorial self-abnegation, and part of the rhetorical topos of modesty. The dedicatory epistle, in the same line of modesty, concludes with the phrase “to whom I reverently kiss hands”, and is signed “to Your Ladyship attached, Nicolò Vito di Gozzi”.³⁵⁸

The peculiarity of this dedication is that it is “addressed to one person and dedicated to another”.³⁵⁹ It was meant as a tribute to a friend, and the real dedicatee. The relationship between them is private, but also in a way public, as the real dedicatee is Fiore and their intellectual as well as artistic relationship is highlighted, which gives us

³⁵⁶ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “la onde V.S. mi farà gratia singolare nell’accrettar questa mia fatica (anzi non mia, ma di suo gentil Fiore) insieme con l’animo mio sempre prontissimo di servirla; et leggendola, supplire con la perfezione del suo ingegno à quanto avessi mancato”.

³⁵⁷ Alessandra Villa, “Tipologia e funzionamento del sistema della dedica nell’Italia del Rinascimento”, *Line @ editoriale* no 2, 2010, 26-48: “esiste anche un *topos* semi-paradossale, in base al quale il dedicatario è celebrato come l’autore potenziale del libro, come accade soprattutto per i testi di istruzione [...] Al dedicatario è attribuita una gratificante onniscienza nella materia, che lo rende, più che il lettore e il beneficiario delle istruzioni indirizzategli, il modello a cui l’autore si è ispirato per raccogliere, il maestro da cui lo scrittore ha appreso tutto.”

³⁵⁸ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “Affettionatissimo, Nicolò Vito di Gozzi.” Sometimes he used the version of his surname Di Gozzi, rather than Di Gozze, when signing his work.

³⁵⁹ Genette, 117.

the possibility of understanding this dedicatory epistle as being dedicated by metalepsis,³⁶⁰ and to think about it as an epistolary preface, as it clearly introduces the present book. Stating that in fact Fiore is also the author of his book, Di Gozze makes his work closer to the homodiegetic narrative. The performativity of this dedication, using Genette's formula,³⁶¹ might be interpreted like this: I am saying that my book is a dialogue on love and beauty, and I give voice to two existing women, who can do this better than anyone else, and by dedicating my work to one who is familiarly connected with the interlocutor, in fact I publicly dedicate the work to one of the interlocutors. Therefore, all connections are familial, two sisters: Nika and Fiore, and husband and wife, Nicolò and Maria. I would argue, taking into consideration the analysis presented here, that this dedication, and the entire book of the dialogues, actually introduce another text: Gondola's dedicatory epistle signed only one year after the publication of this book.

2.3 The dedicatory epistle signed by Maria Gondola: "To a woman no less beautiful than she is virtuous and gentle, Fiore Zuzzori in Ragusa"

The book of dialogues, *Discorsi*, written by Di Gozze, is divided into four parts (four days) and represents a discussion about topics from Aristotle's *Meteorology*, such as the characteristics of the elements, stars, comets, and atmospheric states in general. The interlocutors in the dialogue are the author and Michele Monaldi. It was published for the first time in 1584, by Francesco Ziletti,³⁶² in Venice. The book is dedicated by

³⁶⁰ According to Genette, 133, some fictional works are dedicated by metalepsis to some of their characters, and as such they become more like prefaces in the form of epistles.

³⁶¹ Genette, 135.

³⁶² Francesco Ziletti was active from 1568 to 1587; he used a comet and Orpheus with lyre as his publishing mark. In the books written by Di Gozze there is a comet, which means that the book appeared in his printing house in San Giuliano in Venice. On Ziletti see: edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web_iccu/imapin.htm (accessed 23 January 2016).

Maria Gondola to Fiore Zuzzori and this dedicatory epistle is independent from the main corpus of the book.

The dedicatory epistle of the first edition of the book is signed by Maria Gondola on July 15th 1582; therefore, it is possible to assume that the book was written in the same year, although it was published in 1584. The date of this dedication could be important because it gives us space to look at this dedicatory narrative together with the two books of dialogues, *Dialoghi* (1581), as it is signed only one year after, and to search for similar influences. The second, revised/censored version of the dedicatory text is dated March 27th, 1585, when the second edition of the book was published. The place and the dedicator in both editions are the same: Ragusa and Maria Gondola. The first version of the dedicatory epistle (signed in 1582, and published in 1584) is thirteen pages long, and the next edition from 1585 is shortened by 1.5 pages – precisely 430 words. These 430 words were simply cut from the body of the text, and then at the end a different date is provided. Written in Italian, until today neither the book nor the dedicatory epistle has been entirely translated into Croatian or English.

This important space which the dedicatory epistle occupies is given by the author of the book to Maria Gondola. She assumes responsibility for the text of the dedication to this book about natural philosophy, written by her husband. Her role of dedicator might be connected with at least three things: the year of publication, the dedicatees' "fate", and the appearance of the author of the book (Di Gozze) as one of the interlocutors within the same book. The content of this dedicatory epistle does not mention anything about the work it opens, apart from the title and the name of the interlocutors: the author of the book Di Gozze, and Monaldi, his friend and a poet. To have somebody else sign the dedication of the book was a common practice, but usually

it was somebody from the press, or a relative, in the case of the death of the writer. Here we have a rather atypical case, the wife of a living author.

The title of the dedication is: “To a woman no less beautiful than she is virtuous and gentle, Fiore Zuzzori in Ragusa”.³⁶³ In the first place, this text pledges and defends Fiore Zuzzori (a person who was alive at the time of publishing, but without any political power or significant economic power), and in addition, it “pulls out”, in Gondola’s words, “these present discourses on the protection, or defence of the female sex”.³⁶⁴ Maria Gondola, obviously, used rhetorical devices and strategies that were inherited from the past, and ones that existed at the moment of writing, all of which came to her through male writing. Using three male authorities (her husband in order to make the case for a social critique against strict Ragusan societal rules, Aristotle, and the poet Monaldi³⁶⁵), Gondola, at the very beginning, gives us her explanation of the reason for writing this text, as well as the reasons for choosing Fiore to praise, laying out the important personal relationships and citing her authorities:

Being introduced by my husband to the discourses, on Aristotle’s
Meteorologica, which he conducted in these days with the very gentle Michele
 Monaldi, never praised enough for the wisdom of his soul, nor for his very
 gentle customs [...] I decided to show a few signs of this, my inner and
 continuous attachment, to show it not to you, as you already know it, but to the

³⁶³ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: “Alla non men bella che virtuosa, e gentil donna, Fiore Zuzori, in Ragugia”.

³⁶⁴ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: “di far uscire questi presenti discorsi sotto la protettione, ò difesa del sesso femminile”.

³⁶⁵ Michele Monaldi (c.1540–1592), a poet and philosopher, member of the Accademia dei Concordi, who lived in Ragusa. He wrote only in Italian. His poetry *Rime del Sign. Michele Monaldi* (1599), where Speranza di Bona’s name appears, is dedicated to Fiore Zuzzori. All his work was published posthumously: the book of ten philosophical dialogues: *Irene, ovvero della bellezza* (1604), and *Dell’Havere, et della Metafisica – Dialoghi Del Signor Michele Monaldi* (1599). See: Ljerka Schiffler, *Miho Monaldi. Ličnost i djelo*, Zagreb, Odjel za Povijest Filozofije – SN Liber, 1984.

world, to introduce these discourses, to which I was introduced by my husband, that courageously appear among men escorted by your honourable name.³⁶⁶

In order to capture the reader's attention, using the rhetorical device of the *captatio benevolentiae* (the securing of goodwill³⁶⁷) with its functional rhetoric of modesty, Gondola explains that she relies on her husband's authority, and in this way she also captures the reader's confidence. As her husband introduced her to his work, she decided to use a part of the book to show her attachment to their friend, the dedicatee Fiore Zuzzori. But, in line with the dedicatory topos of truth, she decided to show it "to the world". In Genette's words, this practice of "taking credit for truthfulness or sincerity has been a commonplace of prefaces to historical works since Herodotus and Thucydides, and of prefaces to autobiographical work, or self-portraits since Montaigne".³⁶⁸ It was obtained by different means, such as "direct observation or duly corroborated testimony"³⁶⁹ as we saw in Di Gozze's *Dialoghi* (1581). Here the dedicator, Gondola, introduces us to "the discourse", a conversation which recently occurred. She provides the testimony of it. The claim for credibility is also done through the expression of the devoutness and humbleness of the dedicator at the end of the dedicatory epistle, as well as through hyperbolic praise of the dedicatee, from the title until the very end of narration.

³⁶⁶ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: "Havendomi il mio marito presentato questi giorni passati li presenti discorsi sopra la Metheora d'Aristotele, i quali fece con il gentilissimo Micheiel Mondaldi, non mai a pieno lodato per la saviezza d'animo, e per li suoi gentilissimi costume [...] deliberai per mostrarne qualche segno di questa mia interna, e continua affettione, non a lei, essendo ella chiara, ma al mondo, di farle presente di questi discorsi, che a me dal mio marito sono stati presentati, i quali prendono grandissimo ardore di comparire tra gli huomini sotto la scorta dell'honorato suo nome".

³⁶⁷ Mentioned in Bizzell and Herzberg, 437. There is an anonymous passage from Bologna, *The Principles of Letter Writing*, 1135: "Goodwill will be secured also from the effect of circumstances if something is added which would be appropriate to both persons involved, or which would be in the purpose of things, or could be suitably or reasonably connected to goodwill, such as 'intimacy', 'affection', 'fellowship', 'familiarity', 'lordship and service', 'fatherly feeling and filial feeling', and the like."

³⁶⁸ Genette, 206.

³⁶⁹ Genette, 206.

It was her idea to write the text not only to defend her female friend, but also to defend the female sex in general, knowing that “many will wonder (*insinutio*) what the reason was which made me to pull out these present discourses on the protection, or defence of the female sex”,³⁷⁰ because they might think that “we, if compared with them are an imperfect sex”³⁷¹ (*exordium – causa scribendi*). The supposed reader is a man, and it is the man who might marvel about the reasons which made the author want to protect the imperfect sex.³⁷²

Following the structure of her ethos, she mentioned the main influential doctrines against women during the early modern period. Firstly, the inseparable connection between bodily and mental weakness: lower physical strength in women is taken as a proof of their mental inferiority. This notion, as already seen, can be read in the Bible, in Aristotle’s philosophy, and also in many treatises of the time. Alluding to Aristotle’s idea of the imperfect animal, Gondola concludes that it is impossible to say that one sex, either male or female, is superior. In this way, it can be seen, she contributes to the *querelle des femmes*, with ideas on female equality with men. She writes:

considering maybe that, as we are not because of our nature capable of wielding weapons, in the same manner we also lack in the knowledge of sciences, and the awareness about things in general, and that we are far away from the customs of moral virtues, a thought which did not reach men from anywhere else than from their affections, and they often make judgements from their own particularities, so different from that truth which they judge and assert, that we are, if compared

³⁷⁰ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: “et venga che molti potriano meravigliarsi della cagione, che mi mosse di far uscire questi presenti discorsi sotto la protettione, ò difesa del sesso femminile”.

³⁷¹ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: “che noi al lor rispetto siamo d’imperfettissimo sesso”.

³⁷² The same concern is expressed in *Dialoghi*.

with them, an imperfect sex,³⁷³ and because of that they invoke many authorities of writers which are far away from the truth, and too incomplete; but if they had wanted to leave apart their own interest, and to make conclusions reasonably, they would have realized that our sex is perfect, and also the sex of their species is perfect, so it is not possible to say in an absolute way, that one is worthier than the other.³⁷⁴

After a comparative analysis, my research has shown that these sentences, along with many others, are the same as those that can be found in the dedicatory epistle by Girolamo Camerata Siciliano to Anna Mendoza de Silva, signed on the 4th August 1567,³⁷⁵ i.e. 15 years before the text by Gondola appeared.³⁷⁶

According to Kelso, when the *querelle des femmes* is in question, there were four main attitudes toward the women in early modern defence literature:

some thought woman at best a necessary evil, some admitted her good in a limited and humble way but of inferior value compared to men, some took her as good and necessary equal with men, and some claimed superiority for her over men. All together set up a certain ideal picture of the renaissance lady[.]³⁷⁷

In Gondola's writings it is possible to find two dominant thoughts: that women are equal to men, but also that they are superior to them.³⁷⁸ Just after the defence of the idea

³⁷³ Allusion to Aristotle.

³⁷⁴ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: "credendosi eglino forse, che si come noi per natura non siamo habili all'essercito delle armi, così ancora naturalmente siamo prive della capacità delle scienze, e cognitione delle cose, et che alontanate siamo da costumi delle virtù morali, laquale opinione ne gli huomini credo non sia proceduta d'altronde, se non vinti da gli affetti loro, i quali spesso fanno giudicare nei proprii particolari molto diversamente da quel vero ch'essi giudicano et affermano, che noi al lor rispetto siamo d'imperfettissimo sesso, e perciò mostrano molte autorità de scrittori troppo lontane dalla verità, et troppo parziali a loro stessi; ma quando volessero deporre da parte l'interesse proprio, e giudicar con ragione, trovariano, che il nostro sesso è perfetto, et perfetto ancor quello de gli huomini nella lor specie, tanto che non si può dir assolutamente, ch'uno sia più degno dell'altro".

³⁷⁵ Camerata, 1-3.

³⁷⁶ The plagiarized part can be seen in the Appendix 1.

³⁷⁷ Kelso, 11.

³⁷⁸ The same idea on the perfection of both sexes can be found in Firenzuola's *Dialogo delle Bellezze delle donne*, 1541; Marinella, *La nobiltà e eccellenza delle donne*, 1600; Agrippa, *De nobilitate et praecellenti foeminei sexus*, 1529; Camerata, *Trattato dell'honor vero*, 1567.

of male and female equality, she introduces the idea that women are superior to men. Accepting Aristotle's version of humoral theory, that moist and cold humours correspond to women, and dry and hot ones to men, Gondola manages to invert the meaning, and come to the conclusion that women are not only equal with men, but better than them:

where Aristotle said, that those who are made of tender flesh are more inclined to mental work,³⁷⁹ because the soul operates upon the corporeal instrument, the constitution when tender, that is to say humid and hot, or humid and cold, is more apt to receive that which is not possible when the constitution is dry and hot, as it is in the male sex: by this mechanism, therefore, it is concluded that women are more perfect than men.³⁸⁰

Gondola does not question that men are closer to dryness and hotness, and women to coldness and moistness. However, according to Gondola, a more temperate complexion and weakness made women more stable and more apt to understand, and since knowledge comes through the senses, women are in a better position to understand intellectual things, and logically they are more intelligent, therefore superior. The same argument is used by Girolamo Camerata in his tenth argument proving women's superiority.³⁸¹

According to Plastina, this kind of argument should be understood as turning the Aristotelian paradigm upside-down.³⁸² Plastina adds that similar arguments could be

³⁷⁹ According to Banić-Pajnić, 2004, 73: Gondola refers to Aristotle's ideas expressed in *De historia animalium IX, I*, (608a 21) where he says that female animals are born with tender flesh and are more apt for studying.

³⁸⁰ Camerata, 10: "onde disse Aristotile, che quelli, i quali sono di carne molle, sono più atti di mente perciò che l'anima opera secondo l'istromento del corpo, la complessione del quale quando è molle, cioè humida e calda, ò humida et fredda, è piu atta a ricevere, che non saria quando fosse di complessione secca calda; o secca e fredda, come quella de gli huomini: da questa disposizione dunque si conchiude che le donne sono più perfette de gli huomini".

³⁸¹ Camerata, 10.

³⁸² Plastina, 14.

found in the work of Polish philosopher Andre Glaber De Kobylin, *Problematy arystoteliczne* (1535 and 1542), and also in the work of Camilla Herculiana.³⁸³

Moreover, the same strategy can be found in some other works from the end of the fifteenth century and the sixteenth centuries. To mention just two: Bartolomeo Goggio (Gogio) (1487) in his only extant work, *Ad divam Eleonoram de Aragona Inclitam ducissam ferrarie de laudibus mulierum Bartholomei Gogii*,³⁸⁴ and Galeazzo Flavio Capra (Capella) in his *Della eccellenza et dignità delle donne* (1525), who proved female supremacy using the same arguments: “the more tender the complexion, the apter the mind is to learn”.³⁸⁵ This view, which claimed female superiority, in Kelso’s words, “may be taken as a natural reaction to the wholesale negation of the virtues, but apotheosis in turn results in absurdities and needs to detain us only long enough to show to what lengths praise could go in that age of extremes”.³⁸⁶

Female perfection is also proved in this dedicatory epistle by Neoplatonic ideas and with clear reference to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, as well as early modern notions of the inseparability of beauty of body and beauty of mind, “the oft repeated argument of woman’s defenders, that she excels man in the goods of the mind as much as she excels him in beauty”.³⁸⁷ To prove her statement apart from the authority of Plato, she uses the authority of clear view, i.e. common sense. This passage is almost entirely taken word for word from Camerata’s fifth reason proving female superiority,³⁸⁸ although in some passages the text is subtly altered and put in the female first person:

because the clear evidence of the beauty of the soul is the beauty of the body;

Plato in his *Phaedrus* shows this very clearly: which is easily persuaded by

³⁸³ See next chapter.

³⁸⁴ Preserved in the British Library, quoted in Plastina, 8.

³⁸⁵ Quoted in Plastina, 2015, 7.

³⁸⁶ Kelso, 21.

³⁸⁷ Kelso, 203.

³⁸⁸ Camerata, 7.

reason, because in well formed matter, the form performs better its operations (cause-reason effect): the beauty of the body (which is the real matter of our soul) being an effect of the proportion of the bodily humours and of their regulated forming virtue, it is possible to say with certainty, that the soul in a well formed body is more virtuous in its operations; where is clearly known, that the beauty of the body is the sign of the beauty of the soul; [...] and even though men would like to deny it, that our beauty overcomes the one of their bodies, the single eye affirms, and shows the opposite, as we are those lacking in hair, which make them appear wild, and painted by nature in white and red colours.³⁸⁹

In this passage the influence of Ficino's ideas, as they were presented in Chapter 1, is obvious. Moreover, almost the same strategy can be found later in the work of Lucrezia Marinella written in 1600, who would explicitly quote Ficino: "Bodily beauty lies not in the shadow of matter, but in the light and grace of form".³⁹⁰ Lack of hair is also mentioned in Castiglione as one of the proofs of female intellectual superiority. Later, when writing about female superiority and equality, Gondola, taking directly from Camerata, points out that the opinion of men regarding women's intelligence and capacity in general is wrong, as:

they often make judgements from their own particularities, so different from that truth which they judge and assert, that we are, if compared with them, an

³⁸⁹ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: "Platone nel suo Fedro lo mostra chairamente: il che ancora facilmente si persuade con ragione, perche nella ben disposta materia, la forma fa meglio le sue operazioni: la bellezza del corpo (il qual'è vera materia dell'anima nostra) essendo un'effetto della proportion de gli humori, et della loro regolata virtù formatrice si può sinceramente dire, che l'anima in un corpo così ben disposto sia più virtuosa nelle sue operazioni; onde chiaramente si conosce, che la beltà del corpo sia segno di quella dell'animo; e non è dubbio, che la bellezza del corpo è maggiore nel sesso nostro, che in quello de gli huomini; dunque farà maggior ancor quella dell'animo loro; et quantunque gli huomini questo volessero negare, che la bellezza nostra sopravanza quella del corpo loro, l'occhio istesso afferma, e mostra il contrario, sendo noi prive di quei peli, che fanno loro parer selvaggi, e dipinti dalla natura d'un colore bianco et rosso".

³⁹⁰ Quoted in Marinella, 1999, 57. It is taken from Ficino's Letter 47: "Pulchritudo corporis non in umbra materiae, sed in luce, et gratia formae."

imperfect sex, and because of that they invoke many authorities of writers which are far away from the truth, and too incomplete.³⁹¹

One more argument in favour of female superiority is given in the last part of the dedicatory epistle, regarding the ideas on the essence of the female and male soul: passive in women and active in men. This difference produces the difference in constitution, which also produces inclinations: men, being of intemperate constitution, are prone to weapons, while women, being of temperate constitution, are prone to letters. Gondola, however, goes even further, arguing that women are better in everything, even in weapons. This part, too, is copied from Camerata's ninth reason.³⁹²

we have the temperate constitution, and when compared with ours we can say that the male's constitution is intemperate, ours has greater convenience in everything, which the intemperate does not have [...]; what men have not is the thing to which we are disposed, that is Letters; and if we want to cede partially to men, that they are braver, and pluckier, from this it does not follow that they are more perfect: because we are inclined to more perfect things, which are the excellent disciplines of the intellect, more so than men, as we have a more perfect and more temperate sensibility.³⁹³

³⁹¹ Di Gozze, 1584: "laquale opinione ne gli huomini credo non sia proceduta d'altronde, se non vinti da gli affetti loro, i quali spesso fanno giudicare nei proprii particolari molto diversamente da quel vero ch'essi giudicano et affermano, che noi al lor rispetto siamo d'imperfettissimo sesso, e perciò mostrano molte autorità de scrittori troppo lontane dalla verità, et troppo partiali a loro stessi."

³⁹² Camerata, 19v.

³⁹³ Di Gozze, 1584: "noi havendo una complessione temperata, et in comparatione della nostra, quella de gli huomini si può dir intemperata, la nostra haver à maggior convenienza a tutte le cose, che non ha la intemperata, si come il mezzo è piu vicino alli due estremi, che non è l'uno all'altro estremo; onde nasce, che noi habbiamo maggior dispositione a quello che sono disposti principalmente gli huomini, che sono l'armi, che non hanno essi huomin a quello che noi principalmente siamo disposte, che sono le lettere: et se vogliamo ceder in parte a gli huomini, che eglino sono piu audaci, e piu animosi, non però segue ch'essi siano piu perfetti; perche noi siamo disposte alle cose più perfette, che sono le discipline eccellenti dell'intelletto, che non sono gli huomini, havendo noi il senso piu perfetto e piu temperato".

Similar arguments appear also in in Fonte (1600), who claimed that women and men had equal results in letters and military services, and who also accepted tenderness as a characteristic of the female body, which proved their superiority.

If we follow the classification made by Kelso, this view on women could be looked upon within the fourth view, “superiority argued by extremists”.³⁹⁴ Also, Šimunković and Rožman³⁹⁵ mention that the idea of female superiority could have been taken from the book attributed to Ortensio Lando, *Lettere di molte valorose donne, nelle quali chiaramente appare non esser ne di eloquentia ne di dottrina alli huomini inferiori*. However, whether Gondola or Camerata were acquainted with these texts, directly or through another source, cannot be proven.

One more argument typical for the time and genre shows the direct influence of Ficino, and we find it also in Camerata in his sixth reason:³⁹⁶ “Apart from that, if women are mostly by men loved, are not they more than men perfect? That the nobility of the final cause is more noble than the other causes, it was obviously shown”.³⁹⁷ The woman in literature was mainly the passive object of love. Women in culture did not have the right to choose. The man is the lover, and the woman is beloved, and at the same time honoured by him. The idea that only through love could perfection be achieved is also present in Gondola’s writings,³⁹⁸ and is clearly inherited from Ficino’s philosophy; in Kelso’s words:

³⁹⁴ Kelso, 284.

³⁹⁵ Ljerka Šimunković and Miroslav Rožman, “Žensko pismo u renesansi, dubrovački primjer: Mara Gundulić i Cvijeta Zuzorić”, *Mogućnosti: casopis za književnost, umjetnost i kulturne probleme*, 4/6, Split, Pododbor Matice Hrvatske, 1998, pp. 235-241, here 239.

³⁹⁶ Camerata, 8.

³⁹⁷ “Oltre di ciò, se le donne per lo più sono da gli huomini amate, non faranno elle piu degli huomii perfette? La nobiltà della causa finale via (sia) piu nobile dell’altre cause ci si mostrò chiaramente”.

³⁹⁸ On this topic see: Erna Banić-Pajnić, “Renesansni traktati o ljubavi (Marsilio Ficino – Nikola Vitov Gučetić)”, *Prilozi za istraživanje hrvatske filozofske bastine*, 38-1 (75), Zagreb, Insitut za Filozofiju, 2012, 35-64.

being loved is nearer perfection. The lover lacking his great desire is an imperfect being, and therefore he seeks union to obtain perfection from his beloved, for abundance is in her perfection of being. Again, the end is more noble than the means. The lover making an idol of his beloved sets all happiness in her and most of all wants to be loved by her. She is the end in love and therefore more noble than he.³⁹⁹

However, this question also had an opposite answer. The common view from Petrarch was that, since the lover is more active than the beloved, to love must be nobler than to be loved. God both loves and is loved: he gives love in the first place, and then he receives it back. The cause, in that way, becomes greater than the effect. We find the same in the courtly love literature which appeared in southern France. This love was always adulterous, and the woman was of either a higher or lower rank than the man. It was based on the influential *Romance of the Rose*, written by two authors, Guillaume de Lorris, who wrote four thousand verses around 1235, and Jean de Meun, who added about seventeen thousand verses around 1265. The women within this type of poetry were mainly objectified, as the reader only gets to know about the feelings regarding the men who are in love with them, and nothing is said about the woman's sentiments.⁴⁰⁰ In this poetry we find one more argument used by early modern writers to prove female inferiority. Being loved by men, and therefore being the object of his love, women were less important and less noble. Courtly love meant that it was more noble to love than to be loved.⁴⁰¹

Etymology was one of the typical rhetorical strategies used in the early modern and medieval periods in order to defend the truth. It was applied both by attackers and

³⁹⁹ Kelso, 153.

⁴⁰⁰ Dante and Petrarch are two prominent examples; in love poetry in general women existed as the object of love, or were dead, married, or similar, but always without a voice.

⁴⁰¹ As will be shown in Chapter 3, the same argument was used to prove female superiority.

defenders of the female sex, sometimes becoming the stimulus for certain arguments; the importance of the name and its meaning in Italian literature is best seen in Dante, where *verba* and *res* are inseparable, and the name was taken as the explanation. Etymology as a rhetorical strategy was strictly connected with *ethos*. Gondola goes into detail to explain the etymology of the noun “woman”. The same passage can be read in Camerata’s third reason.⁴⁰²

Moreover, the name of the Woman (*Donna*), which does not mean anything else than Lady (*Signora*), and not of herself, because she would be the Lady (*Signora*) of nothing, and the man in this manner should be better called mister (*Signore*), because the woman cannot be denominated the Lady (*Signora*) of the world’s things, because neither women nor men are superior to these, therefore, if we call woman the “signora”, it is always understood with regards to the man, whose name not without reason was imposed by Italian – the awakened intellects, and excellent and judicious imposers.⁴⁰³

The online thesaurus TLIO, or the Thesaurus of Early Italian Language,⁴⁰⁴ offers among other definitions of the noun ‘*donna*’ (‘woman’) as a person of high social status, and also high moral and intellectual qualities, of female sex, the same as the lady, and also as one who has authority, who dominates, offering synonyms such as lady and patroness. The etymological root of this noun should be looked for in the Latin verb “*dominam*” – to dominate (in Italian *dominare* – to dominate) which also has the equivalent in Italian language, *signoreggiare*, which is the etymological root for the

⁴⁰² Camerata, 5v-6r.

⁴⁰³ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: “Il nome ancor della donna, il qual non significa altro ch’una Signora, e non di se stessa, perché sarebbe Signora di nulla; et l’huomo in questo modo meglio si potrebbe dir signore, che la donna, ne meno si puo dir signora delle cose del mondo, perche non meno è l’huomo, che la donna superiore à quelle; dunque domandandosi la donna signora, bisogna ciò intendere rispetto all’huomo, il qual nome non senza cagione da gli Italiani è stato imposto, come da gli inteletti svegliati, et eccellenti, e come da i giuditiosi impositori”.

⁴⁰⁴ Available at: tlio.oiv.cnr.it/TLIO/ (accessed 8 February, 2016).

word ‘lady’ – *signora*. So, the woman is the one who *domina* (or *dom’na* and after the reduction of the consonant group it became *donna*). In early modern representation, this etymological explanation was often used to explain that woman dominates over men, and that she is superior to men, as we find in Gondola’s text. Even before, the appellative *donna* or *dona* was used only before the name of a noble woman.⁴⁰⁵

The other women authors used the same strategy, but with some variations. For example, Lucrezia Marinella, in *La nobilta et l’eccellenza delle donne*, inferred “women’s excellence from the excellence of the words *donna*, *femina*, *Eva*, *Isciah*, and *mulier*”.⁴⁰⁶ Later, two women authors whose work was published posthumously, Moderata Fonte (1600) and Arcangela Tarabotti (1654), used the noun *donna* in order to prove female superiority or equality, but in a different way. Fonte (1600) connected the word *donna* with the noun *dono* – gift. Tarabotti, in quite an unusual way, actually went so far as to connect the word with *divinità*.⁴⁰⁷

The invoked, mentioned, and supposed authorities in Gondola’s text are all men, from the past (Aristotle and Plato for ideas, Plutarch and Boccaccio for exempla), and from the present (the two interlocutors in the dialogue, Di Gozze and Monaldi). The most popular authorities of the early modern period included Aristotle, Plato, St Augustine, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Vives.⁴⁰⁸ In order to proclaim something as truth it needed to be proved by the past. As pointed out by Dunn, “authority was a textual inheritance, a finite set of authorities who could be adduced or copied but rarely added

⁴⁰⁵ In the online etymological dictionary: *donna* valac. Doamna; prov. Domna; fr. Dame per (damne – domn); sp. Sona; catal. E port. Dona. Available at: www.etimo.it/?term=donna (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁴⁰⁶ Cox, 2011, 238.

⁴⁰⁷ See English translations: Fonte’s *The Worth of Women*, 1997, and Marinella’s *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 1999.

⁴⁰⁸ Kelso, 12: “Lists of authorities were equally popular in the renaissance – Aristotle, Democritus, Simonides, Euripides, Thucydides, Juvenal, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, Matheoulus, Jean de Meun, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Luis Vives”.

to. The essential genre for the medieval writer was thus the gloss, the ligature between the authority and writer”.⁴⁰⁹

For women in the early modern period, the struggle to be credible included mentioning male authorities. However, the same authorities were very often used to prove completely different arguments. Here, the oft-quoted metaphor of the ‘wax nose’, suggested by French theologian and poet Alan of Lille,⁴¹⁰ might be useful. He used this metaphor to explain that authoritative subjects were often twisted to please different authorial needs. As already pointed out, the authority of husband, the one who introduced Maria Gondola to Aristotle’s thought, was reinforced with several topoi; his work is described as ‘effort’ and his authority is highlighted several times within the dedicatory epistle. By pointing out the expertise of her husband, it might be suggested that Gondola, in line with the modesty topoi, avoided claiming authority for herself. Which is, of course, a strategy used to manipulate the situation, and to reaffirm her place and authorial position at the opening of the book.

2.3.2 Exempla

The rhetorical technique of the exemplum, together with the analogy, was highly popular in the early modern period. It was “most frequently used to provide clarification of the general statement and to demonstrate the truth of the general statement”.⁴¹¹ In Erasmus’ words the exemplum as a strategy was important “not only to make our case

⁴⁰⁹ Dunn, 8.

⁴¹⁰ Alan of Lille writes in *De fide Catholica I*: “Sed quia auctoritas cereum habet nasum, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum, rationibus roborandum est”, quoted in *Authorities in the Middle Ages: Influence, Legitimacy and Power in Medieval Society*, ed. Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola, and Aironen Tuija, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2013, 69.

⁴¹¹ See John D. Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1989.

look convincing, but also to dress it up and brighten, expand, and enrich it”.⁴¹² This rhetorical strategy uses:

inductive reasoning and as such it does not actually prove anything; it is arguing from the probability that known instances are parallel to and illuminating of those less well known [...] The persuasive impact of such a method of reasoning is increased, of course, as one increases the number of examples.⁴¹³

In the context of the *querelle des femmes*, exempla from the Bible, mythology, and history were used in order to prove female equality/superiority.

The next six pages of Gondola’s dedicatory text cover 15 examples of illustrious women from the history of ancient Rome and Greece, which she uses as a proof of female genius and female equality or superiority. She also explains why this list is important, by stating: “I believe women should have some recommended encomium in order to shut the mouths of those who are their detractors, and open their eyes to reason”.⁴¹⁴ The same sentence can be read in Camerata’s dedicatory epistle to Anna Mendoza de Silva.⁴¹⁵

For the catalogue of illustrious women from the past Gondola does not use Camerata’s text anymore, but rather, as proved by Janeković-Römer, she refers to Boccaccio’s *De Claris Mulieribus* (1374) and Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* and *De mulierum virtibus* (written in the late first century), quoting them, although it is obvious that she was using them from secondary sources. Wise women from “ancient Rome and Greece” mentioned by Gondola are: a philosopher, Arete of Cyrene (the daughter of Aristippus) who in Gondola’s words “was so learned in Greek and Latin letters, that in

⁴¹² Erasmus, *De copia*, quoted in Lyons, 1989, 17.

⁴¹³ In *Encyclopaedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, ed. Theresa Enos, New York, Routledge, 2009, 247.

⁴¹⁴ Di Gozze, 1584: “crederei, che le donne dovessero havere qualche pù segnalata lode per chiuder la bocca à i detrattori loro, et aprirgli gli occhi della ragione”.

⁴¹⁵ Camerata, 2v.

all Greece it was thought that Socrates' soul passed in her"; Themistoclea, a priestess at Delphi also known under the name Theoclea, Pythagoras' sister,⁴¹⁶ who was:

not only learned but a erudite, and it is said that Pythagoras learned more from her, than she from him, as he was her disciple, as it is possible to see in an Epistle he sent from Rhodes to his sister, who at the time was reading philosophy in Samothrace: Pythagoras – a disciple, and brother wishes good health to you Theoclea, my sister[.]

She then mentions Carmenta, wrongly stating that she was the wife of Evander,⁴¹⁷ “and that was because of the high eloquence she had in verse, named in Latin Carmen, where she had such a facility as the other in prose”. Next to her Gondola mentions: Axiothea of Phlius and Lastheneia (or Lasthenia) of Mantinea (Plato's students), who are presented to have had a sharp intellect and profound memory; the Lydian queen Mirthis; a Roman poet and writer of epigrams, Cornificia; Lelia Sabina (Silla's daughter), who in fact was ‘Lelii fillia, the daughter of Gaius Laelius Sapiens⁴¹⁸; Cornelia Scipionis Africana (mother of the Gracchi); a Roman virgin, Cloelia; Portia (Cato's daughter), who wounded herself in order to show that she was worthy of Brutus' trust; Aretaphila of Cyrene;⁴¹⁹ Camma from Galatia⁴²⁰ (a Galician princess and priestess of Artemis); and she ends the list with the Amazons, who were very popular at the time. All of them are elevated because of their knowledge, wisdom and erudition, which included eloquence, knowledge in philosophy, knowledge in speculative letters, and, of course, some kind of connection with men.

⁴¹⁶ According to the other sources she was his teacher. See Appendix 1.

⁴¹⁷ In fact, Carmenta was not his wife, but his mother.

⁴¹⁸ See Appendix 1.

⁴¹⁹ Who lived about 120 B.C.

⁴²⁰ See Plutarch's *Moralia, De Mulierum Virtutibus*, [Bravery of Women], part 2 of 2, 543-553. Available at: penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/moralia/bravery_of_women*/b.html. Accessed 12 December 2016.

Janeković-Römer⁴²¹ suggests that Gondola had not actually read Boccaccio, but used this catalogue of exempla from another source, a book which had the same mistakes as *Maria Gondola*, written by Spanish priest and courtier Antonio de Guevara (c.1480–1545), *Reloj de Principes* (Valladolid, first published in 1529).⁴²² In fact, *Reloj de Principes* and another one by him, *Libro aureo*, were very popular in the sixteenth century and later, and more than 200 editions of the book existed all over Europe, in Latin, Italian, English, German, and Dutch,⁴²³ and moreover and most importantly we know that a copy of the book in Italian translation existed in Ragusa.

Both the *Libro àureo* and *Relox de principes* were translated into Italian, and each has more than one translation. *Libro àureo* first appeared in 1542 in a free Italian translation by Membrino Roseo da Fabriano entitled *Vita di M. Aurelio imperadore, con le alte, et profonde sue sentenze* [...] Roma, Baldasare (sic) de Cartolari Perugino, 1542) which was reprinted three times over the next two years. A second Italian translation of the *Libro àureo* appeared in 1544, entitled *Vita, gesti, costumi, discorsi, lettere di M. Aurelio imperatore, sapientissimo filosofo, et oratore eloquentissimo* (Vinegia, Vincenzo (sic) Vaugris a'l segno d'Erasmus, 1544).⁴²⁴

Among many editions in Italian, my research has shown that the book used by Gondola is *Libro di Marco Aurelio* published in 1568, as the same sentences appear there.

⁴²¹ Janeković-Römer, 2004, 105-123.

⁴²² *Relox de principes* is the second book written by Antonio de Guevara. It is a new version of *Libro aureo de Marco Aurelio*, and that is the reason that these two books are sometimes taken as one. In fact, there are two books, and the first edition of *Relox de principes* appeared in 1529, where the author writing about the life of Marco Aurelio wrote a tract about the education of princes, as it was common at the time. The next edition was three times larger than the first one. The authorities on whom de Guevara relies are Plutarch, Seneca, Plinio, Aulo Gelio, then historians such as *Scriptores* from Historia Augusta, Suetonio, Cesar, etc.

⁴²³ In Cherchi, 43.

⁴²⁴ Lynn Lara Westwater, "Humanism Reworked: the Reuse of Guevara's *Relox de Principes* in Doni's *Marmi*", ed. Cherchi, 1998, 43.

Moreover, Jireček's catalogue mentions four copies of *Vita Marco Aurelio*,⁴²⁵ which might be this book. Some exempla from the past are taken over from Book II, chapter 33 of Antonio de Guevara's, *Libro di Marco Aurelio con l'horologio de principi*.⁴²⁶ For example, the following passage from Gondola's text appears already in De Guevara's book:

Where I leave Cornelia, the mother of Gracchi, who in Rome was well-known, but more honoured for sciences she read in Rome, than for successes of her sons in Africa, who once was asked by a certain Roman, what was her greater honour, to see herself as a master of so many disciples, or to be mother of many children; Cornelia answered, I pride myself more for the science I learned, that for the children I bore; because children maintain honour during life, and disciples affirm perpetually the fame after death. It is said that books written by this matron, Cicero not only read, but he was mainly influenced by her sentences.⁴²⁷

Following this, there is a direct question to the reader: "Now don't you see the excellence of our sex in these ancient women Greek as well as Roman".⁴²⁸ Here we read the appeal to general acknowledgement of her logical, common sense. Apart from these exempla from the past, there are also women from the contemporary moment. Along with Fiore Zuzzori, the dedicatee of this work, Gondola mentions one more woman

⁴²⁵ Jireček, 514.

⁴²⁶ Antonio de Guevara, *Libro di Marco Aurelio con l'horologio de principi*, Venetia, Francesco Portonaris, 1568, 61r-62r: Secondo libro: "Come le donne potrebbero essere non manco saui e che gli huomini", Cap. XXXIII.

⁴²⁷ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: "Dove lascio io Cornelia madre di Gracchi, la quale in Roma era molto conosciuta, ma molto più honorata per le scienze, che leggeva in Roma, che per gli acquisti, che facevano i suoi figliuoli in Africa, laquale una volta domandata da un Romano, di che haveva maggior gloria, ò di vedersi maestra di tanti discepoli, ò d'esser madre di tanti figliuoli; rispose Cornelia, piu m'apprezzo della scienza che ho imparato, che de i figliuoli che ho partoriti; perche i figli mantengono l'honore in vita, et i discepoli perpetuamente sostentano la fama doppo la morte. Dicono, che i libri che scrisse questa matrona, Cicerone non solamente gli lesse, ma grandemente si prevalse delle sue sentenze."

⁴²⁸ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: "Hor non vedete l'eccellenza del nostro sesso in queste donne antiche si Greche, come Romane".

from the contemporary moment, Margareta di Menze. Her example is used to prove that women can learn easier than men:

This talent and this our excellence is proved by many elevated female souls, as you already have understood, and among the others in my times there is a very beautiful and very gentle Madonna Margherita Menze, who widely showed how our women can easily learn, and how much their intellect is sharper, and more inclined to the disciplines, which men do not have.⁴²⁹

The name of Margherita Menze is traced only in Di Gozze's *Dialoghi*, where together with the other women from Ragusa, she is mentioned as an example of beauty and intelligence.⁴³⁰ A very similar passage can be read in Camerata's book, where he refers to a woman who is elevated because of her education, but he does not provide her name, but only states that she was elevated because of her vast knowledge, and that she was from "this city".⁴³¹

Gondola speaks not only about speculative letters, but also about weapons: the catalogue of illustrious women ends with a mention of the heroic lives of the Amazons: "Long will remain in memory the women from Scythia, called the Amazons, who were so gifted in weapons, that they increased their empire magnificently, governing with those weapons the greater part of Asia".⁴³² The myth of the Amazons was popular in the Italian peninsula as well as in the other states of late medieval and early modern Europe, mostly in the sixteenth century, when interest in classical mythology was reinforced by

⁴²⁹ Di Gozze, 1584: "Di questo dono, et di questa nostra eccellenza ci hanno mostrato il segno molti spiriti elevati delle donne, come già havete inteso, ma tra tutte l'altre a tempi miei la bellissima et gentilissima Madonna Margherita Menze, la quale Idmostrò quanto sono le donne più facili all'imparare, e quanto hanno intelletto più accuto, e più disposto alle discipline, che non hanno gli huomini."

⁴³⁰ Di Gozze, *Dialogo della bellezza*, 1581, 31.

⁴³¹ Camerata, 17v.

⁴³² Usually the representation of this myth served different purposes. Sometimes to show that women can live without men in female-only societies. Their example was used as proof that women could be good warriors like men (as in Gondola's text). Christine de Pizan used their example to prove female capacity to govern and organize a community wisely.

stories of travellers in ‘the new world’.⁴³³ The myth about warrior Amazons came to the early modern reader from Greek mythology, mainly through Herodotus’ writings.⁴³⁴ According to the legend, Amazons, courageous warriors, removed their right breast in order to manoeuvre in an easier way with their weapons (typically, bows and arrows), and they took care only of their daughters, and abandoned or killed the sons. The only contact they had with men was for reproductive purposes. Herodotus wrote that they came from Schitia (the area next to the Black Sea, around the river Don). In Italian literature, we find them in Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* (Canto XX, 33) and Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*. However, in literature of the eastern shore of the Adriatic in the sixteenth century the interpretation of this myth was not so frequent,⁴³⁵ and was very curious and particular to the region. Due to Herodotus positioning them in a place which today is approximately southern Ukraine, the Amazons’ supposed Slav origin was praised in certain writings in Ragusa after 1525. In 1643, Jakov Armolušić insisted on it when defending the female sex in his poem written in Slav. The fact that Gondola does not mention the importance of their Slav origin gives us the possibility to suggest once more that her writing should only be looked upon in the context of Italian literature and Italian influence.

The example of the Amazons was suitable for Gondola to reaffirm her ideas regarding women, posing the question and at the same time providing the answer to it,

⁴³³ See: Anne R. Larsen, “‘Un honneste passetems’: Strategies of Legitimation in French Renaissance Women’s Prefaces”, *L’Esprit Créateur*, 30.4, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, pp. 11-22.

⁴³⁴ See Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1981.

⁴³⁵ Jakov Armolušić, *Slava xenscha i protivni odgovor Giachova Armolusichia Scibencanina Cvitu Sestomu*, Padua, Giulio Chrivelaro, 1643; Jakov Armolušić, *Slava ženska i protivni odgovor Giacova Armolusichia Scibencanina Cvitu Sestomu*, Šibenik, Gradska knjižnica “Juraj Šižgorić”, 1993; Vinko Pribojević’s speech in Latin, on the origin of the Slavs, published in 1532, also confirms this idea. See: *Oratio Fratris Vincentii Priboevii Sacrae Theologiae Professoris ordinis praedicatorum de Origine Successibusque Slavorum*, Venetis, MDXXXII, no pagination. Dunja Fališevac, *Stari pisci hrvatski i njihove poetike*, Zagreb, Hrvatska Sveučilišna Naklada, 2007b, 301-325, especially the last chapter on early modern Croatian literature from a gender perspective.

invoking once more the authority of *common sense*. Introducing this part with a second direct negative question to the reader, Gondola states:

Now, don't you see, that the nature of our sex does not lack the capacity to make us not only ready, and suitable to the weapons, as it does in letters, and that the strength of the soul appears in us, no less than in men; and we are quite more disposed to these effects, to which men are not, if we want to believe our reason.⁴³⁶

The last words suggest clearly that it is almost impossible not to believe the claims made above. This powerful passage, is however again taken from Camerata.⁴³⁷

The closure of this dedicatory epistle is almost the same (only a few words are changed) as Camerata's dedicatory epistle to the princess of Eboli. However, the possibility that Camerata also plagiarized his work should be taken into consideration, but this part is important to highlight, because of the questioning of the later representation and mythologization of Fiore Zuzzori:

With this aim, therefore, and because of these reasons I wanted to address to your Ladyship, these present days of my husband, as to one who only with her name will quiet the soul of malice and invidiousness, as all those rare virtues one woman could be adorned with, and which could describe the perfection of our sex we find in you. Your ladyship will do me the favour of accepting these words together with my soul always ready to be at your service, and just by reading this with the beauty of your intellect you will fill any gap made by my husband, and both of us will stay committed to you for always, and once I get to

⁴³⁶ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: "Hor non vedete, che la natura del nostro sesso ancor non ha mancato di farci disposte, non che atte all'armi, come si fece ancor alle lettere, et che la fortezza d'animo s'è mostrata in noi, non meno che ne gli huomini; e molto più noi siamo disposte a questi effetti, che non sono gli huomini, se alla viva ragione creder vogliamo".

⁴³⁷ See Appendix 1.

know that these his efforts you liked, I will search for some other way, and some other occasion to be at your service, and to convey the world in a better way than I did until now in what I do believe in your innumerable merits, to whom I kiss hands, desirous to your gracefulness.⁴³⁸

The rhetoric of modesty is also dominant in this passage, and I do believe that the main problem is that the modesty tropes have been taken literally by previous scholarship. The ideas of serving the dedicatee, to be at service, the possibility that there are some gaps in the work of the authority, if these are understood in line with the rhetoric of modesty, then the relationship between the supposed and actual authority becomes more visible. The topos of offering the work as a gift, typical in the dedicatory genre, served as a performative act, and it shows the relationship the dedicator has with the dedicatee. In fact, here it is obvious that the author offers his/her work as a gift, expecting to receive something back, which is the act of reading. Therefore, following the fact that almost all the text of the dedicatory epistle had been plagiarised, conclusions by previous scholarship regarding the uniqueness of this text and Maria Gondola's authorship should be reconsidered.

⁴³⁸ Di Gozze, 1584, no pagination: "A questa fine dunque, e per queste cagioni ho voluto dirizzar à V.S. queste presenti giornate del mio marito, come a quella che solamente col suo nome acquietarà l'animo de i maligni et invidiosi, essendo in lei tutte quelle piu rare virtù, che possano adornar una donna, et che possano descriver la perfetione del sesso nostro. La vostra Signoria mi farà dunque gratia d'accettarle insieme con l'animo mio prontissimo di servirla, et leggendole, supplire con la bellezza del suo ingegno a quanto il mio marito haverà mancato, che ambi due gli restaremo obligati per infinite volte; e quando conoscerò, che queste sue fatiche gli siano state a grado, cercherò in altro tempo, e con altra occasione di servirla, et far al mondo conoscere meglio di quello che ho fatto fin'hora l'osservanza mia, et gli infiniti meriti di lei, allaquale bacio le mani desiderosissima della sua gratia".

2.4 The cut or censored part of the dedicatory text: “one digression inserted by Maria Gondola”⁴³⁹

On the second page, after words praising Fiore’s name once again, “so worthy and respectable, which should be the most secure defence against impudent strokes by the envious and those who, because of their own and natural malignity are always ready to bite and rip apart other people’s things”,⁴⁴⁰ one and a half pages of the text are cut in the second edition of the book. The cut text, 430 words, mainly contains a critique of Ragusan society’s conventions regarding restrictions towards one woman – the dedicatee Fiore Zuzzori, as well as a critique of hypocrisy and falseness in general, juxtaposing the cruel and wild Ragusans with the more illustrious souls of Italians. Applying the rhetoric of amplification, Fiore’s beauty of body and soul are mentioned as the reason for the envy and rancour of the people in “my homeland”. Fiore’s qualities are juxtaposed against envy as the main negative characteristic of the Ragusans, and after praising her name, the cut part begins, where Ragusans are compared to wolves:

by whose bites she [Fiore] more than any other woman in my homeland was touched; the reason lies in her rare qualities, never seen in another woman of our century, who together with the beauty of her body, and the virtues of her soul, made evil people suffer, as it always happens that excellent things foment rancour in those who are full of evilness and envy, in order not to worsen their open wound, they pour out miserably with their foolish words the teasing of their sad passion.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ Antonin Zaninović, *Drugo izdanje djela Nikole Gučetića*, Dubrovnik, Anali HI JAZ. 2, 1953, 204: “Uz ovaj glavni sadržaj ove posvete umetnula je Marija Gundulić jednu digresiju”.

⁴⁴⁰ Di Gozze, 1581, no pagination: “i quali per lor propria, e natural malignità sono sempre pronti a morder, e lacerar l'altrui cose”.

⁴⁴¹ Appendix 1.

Immediately after these words, she adds the possibility that Fiore might leave Ragusa (topos of departure, as dealt with in the first part of this chapter), and introduces the clear opposition between ‘us’ (Ragusans, envious, weak) and ‘them’ (healthier and steadier Italians). The thing that I believe characterises this part of the dedicatory epistle, and which it is not possible to find in the rest of the text, is the representation of the self and the first-person narration. It is the ‘I’ who regrets, thinks, feels, who curses, suffers and praises God, and at the end accepts the will of the cruel destiny. This ‘I’ is opposed to Fiore’s ‘you’ which is emphasised in this part of the dedicatory epistle:

but I only do regret, as you could not stand, that the splendour of your virtues blinded their weak eyes, and your sweet appearance became to them more bitter, you will illuminate with your splendour the other eyes, healthier, and steadier, and you will, despite us, make brighter those shady and pleasant Italian woods, and they will hear the pleasing and sweet accent of your words, and you will make sweeter, with your appearance, those who are not overwhelmed by the mischievousness of bitterness, leaving these our eyes apart from their Sun (Ah cruel destiny, ah Cruel and superb Heavens).⁴⁴²

The rhetorical device of parenthesis to introduce the exclamation is also present here. After this exclamation, the following topos of departure is very like one already described in the first part of this chapter, present in Di Gozze’s *Dialoghi*. She continues the lamentation, and here it appears that Fiore indeed left Ragusa. In the dialogues, Di Gozze only mentions the possibility that she could have left; now it appears that it really happened, although in the title of the dedicatory epistle it is written that she was in Ragusa:

⁴⁴² Heinrich F. Plett “Parenthesis”, *Encyclopaedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane, Oxford University Press, 2006; *Encyclopaedia of Rhetoric* (e-reference edition), Oxford University Press, The Midnight University, available at: www.oxford-rhetoric.com/entry?entry=t223.e175 (accessed 16 February 2007).

and leaving these our places dark and sombre to resound with horrible sounds of Wolves, Bears and Tigers, and now and then when I am thinking about your departure I feel such a sadness in my mind which is impossible to cure, together with enormous compassion towards myself, that I curse the hour and the place when I saw and met you, on the earth, with such rare virtues; given that at the beginning they were joyful and cheerful to me, and at the end they became with your absence sad and painful to me.

What echoes in this part, I believe, is the pronouns I and me, as everything that happened made Gondola suffer. Accepting her fate, she continues, using powerful comparisons:

now, as it was the will of my cruel destiny, and that fetid and vicious Harpy, greedier than Devil, and more infamous than Cacus, more perfidious than a Jew – the big enemy of our nobility, but also the occulted respect for one who has among his heroic virtues a respectable example to his offspring, to whom the scales of Justice are dearer than money – I pray to God, as in this world there is no hope that we see each other, to connect us, at least where false, blasphemous, sad, and malicious thoughts are a hindrance, and where the truth is relished with more illustrious souls, not with hopeless, unjust and cruel people; where no more is it possible to feel the bites of the poisonous snakes, nor is it possible to hear the terrible voices of these horrendous wild beasts, but where the heart is satisfied by sweetness and softness, and the soul, by hearing the pleasing sounds of new and unusual accents.

Following the Petrarchan tradition, envy represented as a harpy comes from Epicurus. This was quite a popular metaphor during the early modern period. For

example, we find it in Tansillo's poetry.⁴⁴³ Moreover, direct exclamation in the first person (I curse, I pray to God), filling the part of *pathos*, is present only in this cut or censored part of the dedicatory epistle. Greed is connected with the Devil, infamy with Cacus, the giant from Roman mythology who was killed by Hercules and whose perfidy is connected with Jews, who also became the enemy of the nobility.

There are two main reasons suggested for omitting the text in Gondola's epistle: the first one is the lavish praise of Italians, which could have been considered inappropriate by the strict government of Ragusa. The second is that Nicolò Vito di Gozze, who had an important position in the government (as mentioned, he was elected rector seven times), simply might have decided to cut the part where Ragusan society is compared to beasts. Apart from this, I would also suggest that the censored part represents more of a confessional kind of writing than the rest of the text; in this part it is possible to grasp the personal expression of the individual, one person in one situation.⁴⁴⁴ As already said in the introduction, Fališevac points out that in early modern Ragusa, unlike the practice on the other side of the Adriatic, there were no literary genres where individuality and subjectivity were main themes, which situation, according to her, could be understood as the assertion of the mode and position of the government towards the status of an individual, suppressing any kind of display of individuality.⁴⁴⁵

Another possible interpretation of the omission of so many words from the epistle can be connected with the two years' time span between signing the dedicatory epistle and the publication of the book. As the dedicatory text was signed in 1582, and the book published in 1584, and if this is the only part of the dedicatory epistle based on

⁴⁴³ Luigi Tansillo, *Poesie di Luigi Tansillo*, London, 1782, 33: in his famous sonnet "O d'invidia e d'amor figlia si ria".

⁴⁴⁴ Janeković-Römer, 2004, 213, calls it "a par excellence ego-document".

⁴⁴⁵ Fališevac, 2007, 20. The first printing house in Ragusa opened in 1783.

historical facts (which can only be speculated), then some circumstances in the life of Fiore Zuzzori (and Maria Gondola as author) might have changed. In such a case, the communicative function of the dedicatory epistle should be pointed out. Every “communicative situation”, according to Jancke, includes the situation of the individual author at the time of writing, i.e. the public situation the author chose to react to or to present.⁴⁴⁶ When this censure is taken into consideration, it might be important to refer here to another Italian work by Di Gozze, *Sullo stato delle repubbliche* (1591), in which at the end, there is a part where he writes that some of his compatriots “were trying to denigrate” his work, “more because of malice, than because of knowledge”.⁴⁴⁷ However, the words about attacks on his person and knowledge could also be understood within the topos of truth, where the presence of enemies was a way to construct the heroic self.

There is of course a possibility that this part of the epistle was also influenced by another source or even taken from another text. However, so far my research in the archives and in digitized books has not yielded any positive results. Nevertheless, the practice of cutting texts in the early modern period was not rare, and it was mainly connected with censorship. Previous scholars connected the censorship with the praise of Italians which the strict Ragusan government could not accept. Although in cultural terms influenced by Italians, Ragusans were very proud of their independent status and their freedom, as explained in Chapter 1.

⁴⁴⁶ Gabriele Jancke, “Autobiographical Texts: Acting within a Network. Observations on Text Type and Power Relations in the German-Language Regions from 1400 to 1620”, ed. Ulbrich, 2015, pp. 118-165, here 123.

⁴⁴⁷ Di Gozze, 1591, 447. To the readers: “questo Nobile Dalmata, al quale tuttavia alcuni de i suoi più ignoranti compatrioti cercano detrudere, più per malitia, che per scientia, se per aventura qualche cosa poco vi sodisfacesse, à volere iscusarlo, et più tosto di esso meravigliarvi come discreti, letterati, et giudiciosi, che assentire a gl’ignorantoni et maligni, che lo riprendono”.

2.5 Reception of Maria Gondola

After more than a century of silence, the works by Di Gozze and by Gondola are mentioned in the bibliographical work which appeared in the eighteenth century. In reception literature, Maria Gondola's name can be found under the references to the name of her husband or the dedicatee of her text, Fiore Zuzzori. To my knowledge, she is mentioned for the first time in Ragusan historian Serafin Cerva's (1686–1759) bibliographical work from 1741,⁴⁴⁸ *Bibliotheca Ragusina, in qua Ragusini scriptores, eorumque gesta et scripta recensentur* (tom III (L-O), Ragusii, 1741). Later, Ragusan poet, translator, and biographer Ignat Djurdjevic (Ignazio Giorgi, 1675–1737) wrote one sentence about her.⁴⁴⁹ Sebastijan Slade (the Italian version of his name is Sebastiano Dolci) (1699–1777) in his *Fasti litterario-ragusini* (Venice, 1767)⁴⁵⁰ dedicated a paragraph to her, saying that Gondola, Di Gozze's wife and a woman of great talent and knowledge, wrote a dedication where she claimed that women were superior to men. Later, in the nineteenth century, an Italian scholar who lived in Ragusa named Francesco Maria Appendini (1768–1837) in *Notizie storico – critiche sulle antichità*, 1802 / 1803,⁴⁵¹ referred to Maria Gondola as Anna Gondola (probably her middle name) and stated that she was equally talented as her husband, who, “married Anna Gondola – the woman of the same virtue and class”.⁴⁵² Also, under Fiore Zuzzori's name, Appendini writes that Di Gozze proved in the dedication that women are more

⁴⁴⁸ Cerva (Crijevic) Fr. Seraphinus Maria, *Bibliotheca Ragusina, in qua Ragusini scriptores, eorumque gesta et scripta recensentur*, tom III (L-O), Ragusii, 1741, 284. Serafino Crijević; the Italian version of his name is Serafino Cerva (1686–1759). His *Bibliotheca Ragusina* was written between 1726 and 1744, and contains 437 biographies of Ragusan writers and educated people who lived before 1742. Cerva stated: “quae nomine uxoris suae Mariae, Floriae Zuzoreae nuncupavit ita inscripta”.

⁴⁴⁹ In *Biografska dela Ignjata Djurdjevica*, ed. Petar Kolendic Beograd, Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1935, 64: “Sub nomine uxoris suae Mariae Gundulae dicavit ‘Dialogos de Metheoris’”.

⁴⁵⁰ Sebastijan Slade, *Fasti litterario-Ragusini = Dubrovačka književna kronika*, Zagreb, Hrvatski Institut za Povijest Hrvatska Povjesnica, Posebna izdanja, 2001, 295.

⁴⁵¹ The book is divided in two volumes, the first one being published in 1802, and the second one a year later, in 1803. Francesco Maria Appendini, *Storia e letteratura de' Ragusei divise in due tomi e dedicate all'eccelso senato della Repubblica di Ragusa*, Ragusa, Dalle stampe di Antonio Martecchini, 1802, 1803.

⁴⁵² Appendini, Vol. 2, 1803, 67: “Ammogliatosi con Anna Gondola, donna d'quale virtù e legnaggio.”

apt than men in literary works, and gave to his wife (a woman of great talent and knowledge) the role of dedicator.⁴⁵³ Later in his text, mentioning Di Gozze's book *Discorsi*, Appendini added: "This work by Maria Gondola, wife of Nicolò was dedicated to Donna Floria Zuzzeri".⁴⁵⁴ All these allusions, however, relied on the second edition from 1585, the one with the censored/cut section of the dedicatory epistle. At the same time, in the city of Ragusa, there existed both editions of the book, one preserved in the Scientific library and the other in the Historical Archive of Ragusa.⁴⁵⁵ At the very end of the nineteenth century, Ljubic (Gliubich)⁴⁵⁶ also mentioned Maria Gondola in his dictionary about illustrious people from Dalmatia,⁴⁵⁷ and under the reference for Fiore Zuzzori, he gave a non-supported hypothesis about her extensive friendship with other contemporary women writers.

The first study dedicated exclusively to Gondola's dedicatory text was done in 1953 by Antonin Zaninović, under the name *Drugo izdanje djela Nikole Gučetića Discorsi sopra la Metheora d'Aristotele*.⁴⁵⁸ Zaninović was the first to "resolve" the confusion about the date of the book's publication, because the previously mentioned critics tended to refer only to the 1585 edition, or give unclear data. It was within this study that all of the censored/cut text in Italian was reproduced, followed by the translation of some passages. Moreover, it was Zaninović who concluded that the

⁴⁵³ Appendini, 1803, 230-231: "Nicolò di Vito Gozze non contento di averle dedicati i suoi dialoghi sulla bellezza, e sull'amore, provando nella dedicatoria nell'esempio di Floria, che le donne sono più atte, che gli uomini alle letterarie applicazioni, le fece pur dedicare dalla propria moglie Maria Gondola, che era una donna di gran talento, e cognizioni, i suoi discorsi sopra le meteore di Aristotele."

⁴⁵⁴ Appendini, 1803, 69: "Quest'opera da Maria Gondola moglie di Nicolò fu dedicata a Donna Floria Zuzzeri".

⁴⁵⁵ Apart from the library and archive in Ragusa, the edition from 1585 can be found at the British Library. For the catalogue of books in Italian archives and libraries, see: edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web_iccu/imap.htm (accessed 7 January, 2015).

⁴⁵⁶ Simeone Gliubich, *Dizionario bibliografico degli uomini illustri della Dalmazia*, compilato dall'Ab. Simeone Gliubich di Citta Vecchia, Vienna, R. Lechner, 1856, 168.

⁴⁵⁷ Gliubich, 1856, 323. Here he speculates about Maria's networks of friends: "Legata in nodo d'amicizia con Nicoletta Resti, Giulia e Speranza Bona, e Maria Gondola".

⁴⁵⁸ Zaninović, 1958. As already mentioned, he was the first to concentrate on differences between the first and second editions of Nicolò di Gozze's *Discorsi sopra la Metheora d'Aristotele*.

vindication of Fiore's rights in the first place led the author to omit a part of the dedicatory epistle, which, I believe, should be taken with a caveat: "mentioning the enviers, she [Maria Gondola] wrote about some bad rumours, which spread in Ragusa, against Cvijeta Zuzorić, and stood in her defence, criticizing harshly those who were spreading those rumors".⁴⁵⁹

Twelve years later, in the most important book on women's writing in Ragusa, Marković (1970) wrote about Gondola, mentioning only the first version of the book from 1584.⁴⁶⁰ In the aftermath of this book many articles were written,⁴⁶¹ among them the most important until now is "Maria Gondola Gozze: *La querelle des femmes* in Renaissance Ragusa", by Zdenka Janeković-Römer. She carried out an important analysis of this dedicatory epistle, emphasizing its theoretical value and its belonging to the European *querelle* debate and, as already seen, she traced some influential texts.

2.6 The dedicatee, Fiore Zuzzori

Finally, I would add here a short analysis of the 'mythologization' of the dedicatee, without the intention of going into any detailed analysis, which might be the topic for some other thesis. Fiora/e Zuzzori (1552–1648)⁴⁶² was born in Ragusa, and later went to

⁴⁵⁹ Zaninović, 1958, 204: "Spomenuvši zavidnike ona se osvrnula na neke loše glasine, što su se u Dubrovniku širile protiv Cvijete Zuzorić, pa je ustala u njezinu odbranu, a žestoko se oborila na one, koji su te glasine širili."

⁴⁶⁰ Marković, 1970, 43–46, here 43.

⁴⁶¹ Here is a list of work by contemporary critics on Maria Gondola and her dedicatory epistle that I managed to consult: Zaninović, 1953; Marković, 1970; Šimunković-Rožman, 1998; Janekovic-Romer, 2004; Fališevac, 2007; Novak, 2008/2009; in English: Ray, 2015. Important analysis of Gondola's text together with other female-signed works in the context of early modern Ragusa, available in English, can be found in Valentina Gulin-Zrnić, "A Kaleidoscope of Female Images in 15th and 16th century Dubrovnik. On of the Approaches to the Second Sex in Three Acts", *Nar. Umjetnost*, 37/1, 2000, pp. 43–66. In French: Gabrijela Vidan, "Cvijeta Zuzorić et les Ragusains. Hommage à Zdenka Marković (1884–1974)", *Most/Le Pont*, 3–4, 1998, pp. 178–185.

⁴⁶² About this and the other research on Fiore Zuzzori and poems dedicated to her by Torquato Tasso, Cesare Simonetti, Dominko Zlatarić, Dinko Ranjina, and Miho Monaldi, see: Marković (1970), Torbarina (1931), Tadić (1939), etc. For bibliography see: knjizenstvo.etf.bg.ac.rs/sr-lat/authors/cvijeta-zuzoric (accessed 15 January 2015).

Ancon, where she died at the age of 96.⁴⁶³ There, along with her sisters and brothers, she had the opportunity to gain an education different from the one typically reserved for women on the east shore of the Adriatic. After marrying a Florentine merchant called Bartolommeo Pescioni in 1570, they came together to Ragusa where he became the Florentine consul, and stayed there until 1583. Probably because of bankruptcy, they went back to the Italian peninsula.⁴⁶⁴ After this date, we do not have any proof of Fiore's presence on the eastern part of the Adriatic shore. Therefore when Di Gozze's *Dialoghi* (1581) appeared, and when Gondola signed her first version of the dedicatory epistle in 1582, Fiore was in Ragusa, but the last archival evidence of Pescioni's presence in Ragusa is December 1582.⁴⁶⁵ There is a document from 1638 in the archive of Ragusa, where she is mentioned.⁴⁶⁶ What remains are poems and in some cases whole books, both in Italian and Slav, dedicated to her, Gondola's and Di Gozze's discursive prose, the anonymous portrait attributed to her (saved in Ragusa), as well as two portraits from the last century (Marko Murat, 1886 and 1929). Additionally, in 1922, in Belgrade, the cultural association was inaugurated under the name "Cvijeta Zuzoric". It was thought that Fiore Zuzzori provided a meeting place for intellectuals at her home in Ragusa, and later in Florence and Ancon,⁴⁶⁷ where, it was concluded by later scholarship, she enjoyed a considerable reputation, but at the same time she was rejected and criticized by others. The reasons for this are only speculated upon, as many

⁴⁶³ See Tadić, 193.

⁴⁶⁴ To my knowledge, a detailed analysis of the life and work of Pescioni still has not been done. Doing such an analysis might provide us with important data regarding Fiore's life.

⁴⁶⁵ See Tadić, 1939.

⁴⁶⁶ Diversa de foris LIX, 239-241, 1638: "si compiacerano le ss.issime in sussidio della giustizia e della Rag.e, di fare eseguire costi la senta nata in questo tribunale a Favore della Sig-a Fiore Zuzzeri."

⁴⁶⁷ Radina Vučetić Mladenović, *Evropa na Kalemegdanu*, Inis, Beograd, 2003, 26: "Na osnivačkom sastanku, o kome je najopsežnije izvestilo upravo Vreme, Branislav Nušić dao je i ime udruženja – udruženje Prijatelja umetnosti 'Cvijeta Zuzorić', u znak sjećanja na ljubiteljku umjetnosti koja je u starom Dubrovniku, u svom salonu, okupljala književnike i umetnike".

things from her life remain unknown. Among that speculation, “envy as the enemy of virtue” is the commonest.

In line with Neoplatonist ideas, Fiore’s corporeal beauty, connected with her inner beauty, in Gondola’s words, is reason enough to be envied. To quote again from the epistle dedicated to her by Gondola: “the beauty of her body, and the virtues of her soul, made evil people suffer, as it always happens that excellent things foment rancour in those who are full of evilness and envy”. But her name, in Gondola’s words, “so worthy and respectable, should be the most secure defence against impudent strokes by the envious and those who, because of their own and natural malignity are always ready to bite and rip apart other people’s things”.⁴⁶⁸

The emblem of the flower connected with beauty and femininity is evident in all the works dedicated to or written about Fiore Zuzzori. In the dedicatory letter to Nika, Fiore’s sister, Di Gozze calls her “a sister of so worthy a flower”, while at the very beginning of the book, Maria says that she is sure that the garden where they have a discussion has never had and will never have a flower more beautiful than Fiore is.⁴⁶⁹ But the flower is also the symbol of passivity, traditionally connected with the female sex, as opposed to the male’s active character, and Fiore Zuzzori became, in the words of Grgić Maroević, a “voiceless legend”.⁴⁷⁰

During the lifetime of Fiore Zuzzori, Ragusan poet Dominko Zlatarić dedicated a book of verses by Cesare Simonetti⁴⁷¹ to Fiore Zuzzori: “Alla signora Fiore Pescioni”.⁴⁷² The dedicatory epistle is dated 23rd April 1579. In the same book, there is

⁴⁶⁸ For the original of this part see Appendix.

⁴⁶⁹ Di Gozze, 1581, 6.

⁴⁷⁰ Iva Grgić-Maroević, *Il genere e la storia. Le donne in poesia sulle due sponde*, Zagreb, SRAZ, XLI, 1996, pp. 29-38.

⁴⁷¹ Cesare Simonetti, *Rime del signor Cesare Simonetti di Fano. Nuovamente poste in Luce*, Padova, Paolo Magiotti, 1579.

⁴⁷² Simonetti, 2-3v.

the madrigal to Fiore Zuzzori, “Per l’illustre signora Fiore Pescioni”,⁴⁷³ another poem dedicated to her on the occasion of the death of her husband, and another one to the death of “F.P.”. Because of this poem, it was thought that initials belonged to Fiore Pescioni and that she died when she was only 45 years old. Later, when the autograph confirming Fiore’s death was found, it was confirmed that she died when she was 96. This fact “diminished” the aureole of the legendary Fiore, who was presented as a mournful widow to Pescioni, who suffered and died soon after her husband. In addition, detailed analysis of Zlatarić’s poetry proved that all his poems dedicated to Fiore are mainly translations of Petrarch’s verses from Italian, thus it can be assumed that the death of Fiore presented in his sonnet was one of his poetical practices of presenting her as Laura.⁴⁷⁴ However, most sonnets and other lyrics at the time were translations, though not exact, of Italian poetry. So we do not need to diminish his creative impetus.

Twenty years later, published posthumously, *Rime del Sign. Michele Monaldi* (1599) were dedicated to Fiore Zuzzori.⁴⁷⁵ The dedicatory epistle was signed by Monaldi’s nephew, Marino Battitore, on 10th May 1599, and the book was published in Venice, at the time when the widowed Fiore lived in Ancon. In the dedication, Battitore explains that he decided to dedicate this collection to Fiore, knowing that it would be his uncle’s wish. He writes, not without rancour, that she was “taken away from her native land”⁴⁷⁶ and that Ragusa continues to live without her, whereas Italy benefits from her presence. This is almost the same explanation as in the cut part of Gonodola’s dedicatory epistle. In the same book, we find four poems about and dedicated to Fiore:

⁴⁷³ Simonetti, 24r-34v.

⁴⁷⁴ See Danilo A. Živaljević, *Cvijeta Zuzorić i Dominko Zlatarić*, Sremski Karlovci, Srpska manastirska stamparija, 1900. However, I mention here only works about or dedicated to Fiore Zuzzori written in Italian.

⁴⁷⁵ In original: “Alla molto illustre signora, la signora Fiore Zuzzeri Pescioni”.

⁴⁷⁶ Michele Monaldi, *Rime del Sign. Michele Monaldi alla molto illustre signora, la signora Fiore Zuzzeri Pescioni*, Con privilegi. Con licenza de’ Superiori. In Venetia. Presso Altobello Salicato. MDIC, 1599, no paginaton: “tolta dal nativo terreno”.

Gianbattista Boccabianca⁴⁷⁷ dedicated two poems to Monaldi, in which he praises Fiore's name and virtues, while the other two are Monaldi's answer to Boccabianca. In these poems, Flora, the flower, is compared to a celestial goddess, a learned muse who unceasingly amazes people around her.

Torquatto Tasso dedicated eight poems (three sonnets and five madrigals)⁴⁷⁸ to the "flower from Illyria". Tasso added thorns to the flower, so Fiore becomes Fiordispina in his poetry (*fiordispina* can be translated as a flower which grows out of acorns).⁴⁷⁹ Tasso's poems dedicated to Fiore can be found in his *Rime amorose composte ad istanza d' altri*, edited by Angelo Solerti. Three sonnets appear: "*Loda Ancona, dove vide una gentildonna ragusea chiamata Fiora Zuzzeri-Pescioni*", "*Loda una gentil donna ragusea chiamata Fior [...] la quale abita Ancona*", and "*Condusse Amor leseo fra due sorelle*", the last of which was only discovered later.⁴⁸⁰ The date of Tasso's poems to Fiore is unknown, but as Torbarina concludes, it is likely to be between 1583, when Fiore left Ragusa, and 1595, when Tasso died. It is proved by one letter⁴⁸¹ that these poems were ordered by Giulio Mosti,⁴⁸² an Italian poet who met Fiore in Ancon, although it is not completely clear if Tasso ever met Fiore in Ancon, as many critics have stated. Tasso explains in a letter to Mosti the way in which he wrote to Fiore: "I send to Your Excellency the madrigal on the subject you asked me about, with

⁴⁷⁷ Monaldi, 19r-19v: "Per la Sig. Fiore Zuzzeri Pescioni. Al Boccabianca", "Risposta del Boccabianca", "Il medesimo Boccabianca al Monaldi", "Risposta al Boccabianca".

⁴⁷⁸ The journal *Slovinac*, number 3, 1882 first published these two sonnets and an article: "Due sonetti di Torquatto Tasso in lode di una gentil donna ragusea chiamata Fior" (mentioned in Živaljević, 1900, 13). See Jorjo Tadić, *Cvijeta Zuzorić*, Beograd, Separatni Otisak iz S.K. Glasnika, broj 6, 7, 8, 1939, 39. Jorjo Tadić, *Dubrovački Portreti*, Beograd, Srpska Književna Zadruga, 1948.

⁴⁷⁹ This was the translation into Serbo-Croatian suggested by Vladimir Nazor, the poet and one of the translators of Tasso's poetry into Serbo-Croatian.

⁴⁸⁰ Josip Torbarina, "Tasovi soneti i madrigali u čast Cvijete Zuzorić Dubrovkinje", *Hrvatsko kolo. Književno-naučni zbornik*. B. Livadić and F. Jelašić, eds, Zagreb, Redovno izdanje Matice Hrvatske, 1940, pp. 69-95. Available at:

archive.org/stream/hrvatskokoloknij00mati/hrvatskokoloknij00mati_djvu.txt
Accessed 29 January 2015.

⁴⁸¹ In Giovanni Marotti, *Fiora Zuzzeri: nobildonna e poetessa ragusea*, Pola, Mario Savorgnan, 1934.

⁴⁸² Marotti, 1934. Mosti was Tasso's friend from his days in hospital San'Anna, where he spent seven years of his life, from 1579 to 1586.

the name of that valorous lady, about whom, if with her real name nominated, we cannot write in a pastoral way, in my opinion”.⁴⁸³

Regarding her posthumous reception, Ignjat Djordjić (Ignazio Giorgi, Ignatio de Georgiis)⁴⁸⁴ mentions Fiore as a woman to whom poetry is dedicated and gives her physical description based on descriptions in poems and in the afore mentioned dedicatory epistles, in his *Vita et carmina nonnullorum Illustrum Civium Rhacusinorum* (written between 1707 and 1716), published in 1935, in Belgrade. Two priests also wrote about Fiore Zuzzori. One is Serafino Cerva, who mentions that Fiore also wrote in the Illyrian language.⁴⁸⁵ Dolci⁴⁸⁶ is more cautious; he mentions that it was thought that Fiore was an excellent poetess. He does not say that she was indeed a poetess. Later, Appendini in 1803 stated that she also wrote in Slavic, apart from her poetry in Italian. He pointed out that Fiore’s favourite genre was epigrammatic poetry.⁴⁸⁷ Appendini also mentions other women, such as a woman from the fourteenth century, Nicoletta di Gozze, who defended herself in Italian in front of Pope Bonifacio IX. In his study on literature in the south Slavic countries written in German, Šafárik, taking information from Appendini, states that Fiore Zuzzori wrote epigrams.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸³ Marotti 1934, 61: “Lettera di Tasso: Al Sig. Giulio Mosti. comunque sia, mando a V. S. il madrigale in quel soggetto, nel qual me l’ha chiesto, col nome di quella valorosa signora, della quale chi col proprio nome la noma, non può scriverne a mio giudizio pastoralmente; ed a V. S. bacio le mani.” Within the same book Marotti provides data on Fiore’s death: “Nel volume dei ‘Morti della parrocchia di S. Gio. Batta. d’Ancona 1663–1697’, che è il più antico che si conservi presso quella parrocchia retta ora da francescani, sono riportate in quel torno di tempo fra molte altre Fiore: Die 21 Januarii 1681 Fior di spina fil. q. lo Baldi a Monte Sancti Viti, diu commorant. Anconae in hac Parochia aetatis suae an. 57”.

⁴⁸⁴ The Italian version of his name is Ignazio Giorgi; in Latin, Ignatio de Georgiis; he (1675–1737) wrote *Vita et carmina nonnullorum Illustrum Civium Rhacusinorum*, (written between 1707–1716), published in 1935, in Belgrade.

⁴⁸⁵ Cerva, 1741: “que prius, adicta musis, multa Illyrica carmina elegantissime ediderat”.

⁴⁸⁶ Dolci, 20.

⁴⁸⁷ Appendini, 1803, 230, states that Floria Zuzzeri Pescionia also wrote in Slavic: “Il genere di poesia prediletto di Floria era l’epigrammatico, e, siccome affermano i dotti contemporanei, i di lei componimenti italiani, e Slavi erano egualmente commendabili per l’argutezza del pensare, che per l’eleganza dello stile”.

⁴⁸⁸ Pavel Jozef Šafárik, *Geschichte der südslawischen Literatur*, Prag, Verlag von Friedrich Tempsky, 1864, 11, 22–23.

The fact that her work has not been preserved (and, according to some authors, was never written⁴⁸⁹) and the lack of data regarding her life has made her an ideal case for mythologization and perpetuated the idealization of her person and life. Not only is she considered the first woman poet from the eastern shore of the Adriatic, but from the twentieth century she became a literary character in many works, which were based on poetry and on Gondola's dedicatory epistle. Fiore Zuzzori is represented as somebody who with beauty, wisdom, and education, provoked envy and was forced to leave her homeland. The mentions by her contemporary writers that she also wrote poetry were pointed out as one more reason to be excluded. Not rarely was the Neoplatonic representation of friendship represented as lesbian love, and the friendly relationship with Di Gozze as a love affair.⁴⁹⁰ Her name and its etymological meaning, the fact that she was married and later widowed, living far away (in Italy), as the lady in courtly love literature, all meant that she was somebody to strive for, to dedicate the most beautiful verses to, to adore as a lady at a distance, and even proclaim her death in poetry 51 years before she died. If we add here the fact that one part of the dedicatory epistle signed by Gondola is plagiarised (even the part where she refers to the importance of Fiore's name), any reconstruction of her life from literary texts should be done with great caution.

The dedicatory epistle written by Gondola was in the previous passages perceived in different contexts: Italian literature and the context of the *querelle des femmes*, and also as part of another book written by her husband, *Dialoghi* (1581), rather than as part of the book to which it materially belongs, and directly together with the work of Girolamo Camerata. This chapter has argued that the text signed by

⁴⁸⁹ Živaljević, 27-31.

⁴⁹⁰ Nikola Đurić, *Sve za ljubav nauke sa mučenicom Cvijete Zuzorića*, Beograd, Štamparija Andre Petrovića, 1929; Luko Paljetak, *Skrovit vrt, Snevnik Cvijete Zuzorić, plemkinje dubrovačke*, Profil international, 2004, etc.

Gondola was written within the context of the *querelle des femmes*, following the main self-fashioning trends, and that it is inseparable from the book of dialogues, where the same or similar arguments appeared. Both texts (the dedicatory epistle and the book of dialogues) represent important and still-neglected contributions to the Italian *querelle des femmes* from the eastern shore of the Adriatic.

Plagiarism⁴⁹¹ or re-writing makes up nearly all of the dedicatory text by Gondola; the only thing she changed is the gender of the narrator, from Camerata's masculine to Gondola's feminine. The part of the text with the exempla is mainly plagiarised from the Italian translation of *Libro di Marco Aurelio*. Therefore, it can be understood as 'horizontal' plagiarism, as it is plagiarised from the vernacular to vernacular.⁴⁹² In some cases this plagiarism can also be understood as *imitatio*, as Gondola for example adds to Camerata's description of an unknown woman, giving her the identity of a specific woman from Ragusa, Menze. However, both books (Camerata's and De Guevara's) are used in an entirely different context, and the effect is different, so it might be possible to suggest that it was more a 're-utilisation' of the texts, and to name it with the positive noun rewriting, rather than plagiarism, which always has a negative connotation.

Asking the questions, such as suggested by Cherchi,⁴⁹³ about what was plagiarised or rewritten, opens up new lines of the investigation. Selecting these sources is highly important, as we know which books were read by Gondola and Di Gozze. Also, it is possible to trace how she reworked her sources.

⁴⁹¹ *Sondaggi sulla riscrittura del Cinquecento*, ed. Paolo Cherchi, Ravenna, Longo Editore Ravenna, 1998b.

⁴⁹² Cherchi, 1998b, 8, distinguishes two types of plagiarism: horizontal, when it is plagiarised from text written in vernacular, and vertical, when the text is translated and taken from Humanistic texts.

⁴⁹³ Cherchi, 1998a, 15.

De Guevara's book was very influential, and the fact that it was reused by Gondola reinforces its importance. De Guevara was not a humanist, and he wrote only in Spanish, and his books were widely plagiarised all over Europe, because of the variety of topics, autobiographic and biographic themes, and more importantly because of the many authorities quoted by Guevara. He re-used the work of Patrizi di Siena, Flavio Biondo, Sabellico, Ficino, Foresti, Dante, Boccaccio.⁴⁹⁴ But why the author decided to take parts from Camerata's work can be explained by different reasons. Firstly, it might be assumed that Camerata also plagiarised his work and in that case the research on his sources might provide us with more data. Secondly, Camerata was an author whose only work was not influential, therefore by choosing this one the plagiarism would be less obvious. And thirdly, the book was printed with the Inquisitorial sign of approval,⁴⁹⁵ therefore it was more secure to reuse this book, when censorship is taken into consideration.

Maria Gondola was a "literary mosaicist, [...] an artist who succeeded in taking elements created by another and assembling them in such a way to produce a new image, a new text".⁴⁹⁶ The technique she applied in cutting and pasting, is more in the domain of editing, than in the authoring the text. But, cutting and writing, as suggested by Smyth⁴⁹⁷ might be understood as "similar modes of textual production", as "every written word, and therefore every written sentence and written text, can only come into being through a process of selection".

⁴⁹⁴ Cherchi, 1998a, 67-74.

⁴⁹⁵ It is written on the cover of the book: Con licentia R. Vic. Epis. et R. T. Inquis.

⁴⁹⁶ Suzanne Magnanini, "Plagiarism in Book II of Leonardo Fioravanti's *Dello specchio della scientia universale*", Cherchi, ed., 1998b, 96. Magnanini used this sentence to define Fioravanti's work.

⁴⁹⁷ Smyth, 9.

There is also the possibility, suggested by some critics (such as Banić-Pajnić⁴⁹⁸), that the authorship of this dedicatory epistle is not certain. There are two possibilities: Maria Gondola could have had access to a library at home, and although she, like all Ragusan women, was deprived of the opportunity to receive a formal education, she did have the opportunity to study at home and to be part of the network of intellectuals around her husband, and finally to assume responsibility for these words. The other possibility is that the author of this dedication is Di Gozze, who decided to give the authorship to his wife. This, in my opinion, should be taken into serious consideration, because the writer Nicolò Vito di Gozze is one of the interlocutors in the *Discorsi*, and therefore the protagonist of the book. In the same way, as he did not want to dedicate the *Dialoghi* to Fiore, as she was one of the interlocutors, he might have had it signed by his wife. The choice of his wife is of course connected with the ideas treated of in the dedication, which are the same as we find in the book, where his wife is one of the protagonists. Here I would add Di Gozze's already known practice of plagiarism, as explained by Novak (2008).

Regarding female authorship and their work within academies, there are different lines of thought. On the one hand, some authors state that Maria Gondola's text was written within the Academia dei Concordi (Novak, 2008, Fališevac, Iva Grgić Maroević). I believe that this conclusion, based only on assumptions, was arrived at only to match a pre-conceived conclusion, even though no proof could be found.

Maria Gondola formally owned these words, but the right to manage them was in her husband's hands. And here, I believe, Foucault's question of why who is speaking is important could be posed.⁴⁹⁹ From the notion of the author, who might be

⁴⁹⁸ Erna Banić-Pajnić, "Žena u renesansnoj filozofiji", *Prilozi* 59-60, Zagreb, Institut za Filozofiju, 2004, pp. 69-89. Available at: hrcak.srce.hr/?lang=hr. Accessed on 21st April 2016.

⁴⁹⁹ Michel Foucault, "from 'What Is an Author?'"', Burke, ed., pp. 233-246, here 234.

both, we then should come to the notion of ‘self’, and the relationship between the author, historical subjects, and the text. The possibility that Di Gozze was the author is clear, I believe. Also it is clear that almost all of the text is plagiarized – a novel finding of this research. But what is important is that Maria Gondola is the formal owner of this dedicatory epistle, which has a strategic function: “an author’s name is not simply an element of speech (as a subject, a complement, or an element that could be replaced by a pronoun or other parts of speech). Its presence is functional in that it serves as a means of classification”.⁵⁰⁰

This fact was used by scholarship as one of the proofs that in sixteenth-century Ragusa – an aristocratic Catholic republic, with a strict patriarchal order, where almost all parts of life were defined by law⁵⁰¹ – there existed the voice of Maria Gondola, who not only wrote about the ‘woman question’, but also signed a text which criticized the Ragusan nobility. Maria Gondola used “inclusive language”,⁵⁰² as she wrote about “us” women, and “us” female friends. The use of inclusive language made the relationship between reader and author more personal, where the author offers her work to the reader.

In reception literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Maria Gondola’s name is found only under references to Fiore Zuzzori or Nicolò Vito di Gozze, although her work has been saved and is possible to trace. Fiore Zuzzori has for centuries been considered the first woman writer/poet from the eastern shore of the Adriatic. This paradox could be explained as a result of different practices: firstly, Zuzzori was celebrated and adored by male writers, and the proof of her writings existed in the authoritative canonical texts and was taken for granted for centuries.

⁵⁰⁰ Foucault, Burke, ed., 234.

⁵⁰¹ Information about how strict state norms regarding cultural life were can be found in Janeković-Römer, 1999.

⁵⁰² I borrow the term from Eckerle, 104.

Within the power relationships, the fact that she was celebrated, for example by Tasso, proved to be a stronger argument in support of her writing activity than the material existence of the text by Maria Gondola.

CHAPTER 3: CAMILLA HERCULIANA (Camilla Erculiani)

In the same year as the second edition of the dedicatory epistle signed by Maria Gondola appeared, 1584, a book by Camilla Herculiana was published in Kraków, entitled *Lettere dii philosophia naturale, di Camilla Herculiana, speciala alle tre stelle in Padoua, Indirizzate alla Serenissima Regina di Polonia: nella quale si tratta la natural causa delli Diluvij, et il natural formatione dell'Arco celeste. In Cracovia. Nella stamperia di Lazaro, nel'Anno 1584*.⁵⁰³ It is written in Italian, by a woman from Padua, and as we can read already from the title, she wrote about themes not so typical for women: the theory of the natural origins of the Great Deluge. It might have been a limited edition, as so far only four examples of this book can be traced today. The archival documentation proves, as shown by Carinci,⁵⁰⁴ that in the period between 1585 and 1588 Camilla Herculiana was questioned by the Inquisition (probably Paduan), because of the ideas in this, her only published book. The process is documented in a book by Jacopo Menochio, *Consiliorum sive responsarum* (1604) on four pages: “Consilium DCCLXVI”.⁵⁰⁵

This chapter argues that paratextual elements, as well as four letters in the book, represent the only work (known until now) by Herculiana, and that it can be viewed in a larger context and connected with female epistolary production in Italian in the sixteenth century, and also connected with Gondola's and Speranza di Bona's paratexts.

⁵⁰³ Camilla Herculiana, *Lettere dii philosophia naturale*, Cracovia, stamperia di Lazaro, 1584 (hereafter *Lettere dii philosophia*). Carinci, 206, mentions that only four copies of the book have been identified, in the Biblioteca Civica, Padua, the Biblioteca Alessandrina, Rome, the Houghton Library, Harvard University, and the Biblioteca PAN, Kórník. For Italian libraries see: edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web_iccu/ima.htm.

⁵⁰⁴ Carinci, 2015.

⁵⁰⁵ Jacopo Menochio, “Consilium DCCLXVI, 766”, *Consiliorum sive responsorum*. Andreas Wécheli and Johann Gymnich, 1604–1616, pp. 180–183.

The choice to include Camilla Herculiana as one of the three case studies in this dissertation, though entirely connected with the Italian context, is founded on several factors, apart from the historical moment, the language, and the late re-discovery of the author. First of all, she uses similar authorial strategies to those found in Gondola's writings, and sometimes even the same sentences, as noted by Meredith K. Ray.⁵⁰⁶ As my dissertation has shown that Gondola's text was mainly plagiarized from the work by Camerata, I suggest that the common influential texts should be searched for. As this thesis argues, the dedicatory narration by Herculiana belongs to the context of the *querelle des femmes*, and as such represents an example from the western shore of the Adriatic. The epistolary genre of the book, the exchange of letters on natural philosophy between Camilla Herculiana and men from abroad (Poland), as well as the testimonies from the Inquisitional trial, are understood as paratextual discursive prose, and as such are connected with writings by Speranza di Bona and Maria Gondola. Apart from this, Camilla Herculiana published only one book, and because of it she was questioned in front of the Inquisition. This book was forgotten for centuries, and the first detailed analysis appeared only in 2013. Moreover, the uniqueness of this book consists in its main topic – natural philosophy – coming from the pen by a woman, Camilla Herculiana.⁵⁰⁷ However, due to Maude Vanhaelen's 2016 discovery of two hitherto unpublished letters sent in 1584 from the Venetian patrician Sebastiano Erizzo to Camilla Herculiana the same year her book was published, there is a possibility that some more work by Herculiana may still be discovered, because these letters clearly refer to other works of hers, works that have been lost and as yet remain unknown to us.

⁵⁰⁶ Ray, 114.

⁵⁰⁷ Carinci, 213: "Camilla, tuttavia, è la prima, e per quanto ne sappiamo, l'unica a scrivere un libro di argomento scientifico programmaticamente volto a dimostrare l'abilità femminile in ambito scientifico e filosofico".

This chapter provides a paratextual analysis of Herculiana's work, arguing for its importance when female writings in defence are taken into consideration. The first textual and paratextual analysis of Herculiana's work was undertaken by Eleonora Carinci (2013), who reconstructed the life and work of the author, and provided highly important insights into the cultural practices connected with female literary and scientific production. Following Carinci's main findings, this chapter will focus on the rhetorical strategies applied by Herculiana for the defence of women and the legitimization of her authorship. The topoi of defence of the female sex in the paratextual elements are analysed, as well as the narration about self. The text of the testimony from the Inquisitional trial is understood as epitext, and included in the paratextual analysis. I argue that in Herculiana's case, as well as in that of Speranza di Bona, the legal aspect of the dedicatory epistle is one of the most important elements, and should be looked upon in the relational context.

In the first part of this chapter, juxtaposing the archival data covered by Carinci with the narration about the self by Herculiana, I will present the work and life of Camilla Herculiana. Subsequently, I will try to provide a detailed analysis of all the paratextual elements of the book and epitext from the trial, and finally I will argue that the exceptionality of the author and narrator lies in the fact that she in this one book managed to meaningfully contribute to several different debates, from the *querelle des femmes* to natural philosophy. The fact that the book was printed in Kraków, and not on the Italian peninsula, will be understood as a strategic authorial act to escape censorship. In reading the historical subtext of this work, I focus on the concept of self-defence within the specific historical, social and cultural context. The preserved document from the Inquisitional trial is taken into consideration here, and once again Herculiana's self-defence at the trial is connected with the defence of women expressed in the paratext of

her book. Two letters addressed to her in the same year when the book is published are understood as the private epitext in correspondence, and ideas of women's defence are highlighted within my analysis of them.

3.1 Camilla Herculiana

The epistolary genre has for centuries been attributed to women. As was shown in the previous chapter, Gondola used the example of Cornelia to prove female superiority. Cornelia, as the erudite woman, the daughter of Zama, was one of the first women whose letters (to her son Gaius Gracchus) were saved, and they were later represented by Cicero. Cicero highlighted the fact that the first letters collected in Rome were written by a woman. In this way, the letter “becomes the sign of the determination and of ‘modernity’ of woman, a sign and a topos which did not change until the eighteenth century”.⁵⁰⁸

One of the most famous women when the epistolary genre is in question, Isotta Nogarola from Verona, exchanged many letters in Latin with the male intellectuals of the time, and did in fact treat some similar topics as Herculiana, only one century before. A very important study on Nogarola's work and life, *Complete writings*,⁵⁰⁹ begins with the following sentence:

author of an important body of works that attest to her erudition, literary skill, and depth of thought, Isotta Nogarola (1418–1466) was a pioneering woman's voice – the voice of that gendered “other” – at the opening of the Renaissance and early modern era. With her older contemporary, Christine de Pizan (1365–1431), an Italian-born French author raised at the royal court, she launched the

⁵⁰⁸ See: Doglio, I-VII, here II: “La lettera diventa così il segno della determinazione e della ‘modernità’ della donna, un segno e un topos che si mantengono inalterati sino al secolo decimottavo”.

⁵⁰⁹ Isotta Nogarola, *Complete writings: Letterbook, Dialogue on Adam and Eve, Orations*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

tradition of the learned woman in the early modern period, setting up the framework within which learned women expressed themselves over the next several centuries.⁵¹⁰

I also believe that Herculiana's work and life should be presented within the framework of learned women's epistolary writing. Herculiana, as well as Nogarola a century before, lived in northern Italy, which was much more developed compared to the rest of Italy, or to Ragusa. In the context of Padua, there was the Venetian Cassandra Fedele whose orations were read in the Studio of Padua, and her letters to Isabel of Castile, or Marcantonio Sabelico; both provide testimony of female epistolary practice. Nevertheless, in the sixteenth century in the Italian context, collections of letters signed by women (with their real name) and published remained relatively scarce. In 1544, the book *Littere*, by Vittoria Colonna, dedicated to the duchess d'Amalfi, appeared in print. After these Angelica Paola Antonia Negri published *Lettere spirituali* (1564, second edition 1576). Laura Cereta⁵¹¹ and Celia Romana published *Lettere amorose* in 1562, and Veronica Franco published *Lettere familiari ai diversi* in 1580.⁵¹² Just four years after Franco's letters, Herculiana's epistolary book was published in Kraków.

But unlike the authors mentioned above, Herculiana discussed philosophical ideas through her letters. Actually, it was natural philosophy; at the time this was the phrase used to denote the study of nature and the physical universe, closer to science, physics, biology. Natural philosophy, in its broader sense, was dominated by Aristotelianism and influenced by Hippocrates' humoral theory, and Galen's reinterpretation of it, as well as the philosophy of Plato, and some occult sciences,

⁵¹⁰ Nogarola, 1.

⁵¹¹ Laura Cereta, *Collected Letters; Fedele, Letters and Orations; Veronica Franco, Poems and Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret F. Rosenthal, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

⁵¹² Doglio, 1993, 33-48: "Scrittura e 'offizio di parole' nelle 'Lettere familiari' di Veronica Franco".

which include cabala, magic, astrology, and alchemy. Herculiana corresponded on these topics with Giorgio Garnero, a learned Frenchman who (according to the closure of the letter) lived in Venice, as well as with the Polish intellectual Martino di Berzevicze.⁵¹³ Moreover, she decided to dedicate her book to another woman, the Polish queen, Anna, in her dedicatory epistle. In this work by Camilla Herculiana, there are four letters, three of which bear her signature. There are two letters from her to Garnero, Garnero's response, and one letter she sent to Di Berzevicze, without his answer. In these letters, Herculiana's knowledge of natural philosophy, Christian doctrine, and humoral theory is demonstrated. In the dedicatory epistle she also treats the topic of women's position in society. It can be said that Herculiana is in these letters completely aware of the landscape of rhetoric and ideology she is writing in, something that is also apparent in the paratextual elements of the book. In her letters, she was engaging in "a practice identical to that which is traditionally done by men, and a practice which recognizes equal dignity [between men and women], even though it acknowledges and reiterates difference, both in nature and in stature".⁵¹⁴

The earliest mention of Herculiana's name and her book can be found in Marina Zancan's influential study *Nel cerchio della luna. Figure di donna in alcuni testi del XVI secolo*.⁵¹⁵ It was also mentioned in a study by Erdmann, but was only listed among other work.⁵¹⁶ As mentioned before, her life and work has been recently reconstructed by Italian scholar Eleonora Carinci (2013), in "Una 'speziala' padovana: *Lettere di*

⁵¹³ Herculiana, no pagination: "Cancelliere Transilvano della sacra Maestà dell'invitissimo Stephano Re di Polonia".

⁵¹⁴ Doglio, VI: "attua un'institutio epistolare, svolgendo, con piena consapevolezza ideologica e retorica, un esercizio identico a quello svolto tradizionalmente dall'uomo, un esercizio che le riconosce pari dignità, pur nella diversità, ammessa e ribadita, di 'natura' e di 'stato'".

⁵¹⁵ Zancan, 259.

⁵¹⁶ Zancan, 259; Erdmann, 214; Paulina Buchwald-Pelcowa, 'Il libro italiano in Polonia nel periodo del Rinascimento', *Il Rinascimento in Polonia: atti dei colloqui italo-polacchi 1989-1992*, ed. Jolanta Zurawska, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1994, pp. 427-453; Cox, 2008, 62.

philosophia naturale di Camilla Erculiani (1584)".⁵¹⁷ Carinci found four copies of the book, and noticed that in all four copies the adjective 'dry' is crossed out by hand, which might be evidence that the edition was quite small. In 2014, Sandra Plastina wrote an article, "'Cosiderar la mutatione dei tempi e delli stati e degli uomini': le *Lettere di Philosophia naturale di Camilla Erculiani*" (2014). In English, Meredith K. Ray in her recent book *Daughters of Alchemy: Women and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (2015) provides a detailed analysis of Herculiana's only book, mainly based on Carinci's study, labelling it "a treatise packaged in epistolary form".⁵¹⁸ And finally, two more letters addressed to Herculiana were analysed, translated, and reproduced in English by Professor Maude Vanhaelen in 2016. There is also a forthcoming publication entitled *Letters on Natural Philosophy* that is expected to appear in 2017.

Who was Camilla Herculiana? How did she gain her education? Why did she decide to publish her only book in Kraków? Why would she, as a woman, decide to write about natural philosophy? What were the consequences? These are all questions which Carinci tries to answer in her recent work, and in many ways she succeeds. To these questions, I would also add a few more: Where did she gain her humanist education? What were her intellectual aims? What can we learn about female authorship from her writings? How and why does she subvert, exploit, and reverse the private characteristic of the epistolary genre to make it a fruitful discussion about scientific

⁵¹⁷ Carinci, pp. 202-229; Sandra Plastina, *Considerar la mutatione dei tempi e delli stati e degli uomini: Le Lettere di philosophia naturale di Camilla Erculiani, Bruniana & Campanelliana, Ricerche filosofiche e materiali storico-testuali*, Pisa e Roma, Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2014, 1, pp. 145-156; Ray, 111-131; Maude Vanhaelen, "Platonism in 16th-century Padua: Two Unpublished Letters from Sebastiano Erizzo to Camilla Erculiani", *Bruniana & Campanelliana. Ricerche filosofiche e materiali storico-testuali*, Pisa e Roma, Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2016, 137-147.

⁵¹⁸ Ray, 114.

themes, for centuries the domain of men? And finally, why is it important to analyse and re-present her work in the context of the female epistolary genre?

Camilla Herculiana was born in Padua, as Camilla Greggetti. The dates of her birth and death are still unknown. Neither is it known where she was buried. However, the second half of the sixteenth century should be taken as the time frame of her life. Through her archival research, mainly by analysing Notarile, Giacomo Perotto, bb. 2210–2219 e 4745–4815, preserved in the State Archive in Padua,⁵¹⁹ Carinci has shown that Camilla was one of the six children of the merchant Andrea Greggetti. The identity of her mother is unknown.⁵²⁰ It seems that she was the oldest of the children, which, as I will try to explain later, might be one of the reasons that she received a humanist education.

Camilla Herculiana was married twice. Her first husband, Alovio Stella, was the proprietor of a Paduan pharmacy.⁵²¹ They had at least one child, a son called Melchiorre (Marchioro). After the death of her first husband, only half a year later, Camilla married another *speciale* or pharmacist, Giacomo Herculiani. From the second marriage, she had five children. How difficult it was for her to raise children and to accept all the demands of family life, we can see from her dedicatory epistle.⁵²²

Her work, as already said, was at the pharmacy. There are many traces of her husband's work as the *speciale*,⁵²³ under the name Giacomo, Jacobo, or Iacopo, and surname Erculiani, Ercoliani, Herculiani, or Arculiani. The usual English translation of the word *speciale* and the feminine form *speciala* is “apothecary”, although it covers a

⁵¹⁹ See Carinci, 2013.

⁵²⁰ Carinci, 205: She had two brothers, Giorgio and Andrea, and three sisters, Lucrezia, Isabella, and Pulisena.

⁵²¹ Carinci, 205. Following her archival research, Carinci mentions that the supposed pharmacy existed in Padua, and localized it in the city centre.

⁵²² See below.

⁵²³ Carinci, 207.

somewhat broader meaning than today's notion of the apothecary, mainly as the knowledge and the education they needed to have was different than it is today:

‘the speziale’ should always force himself to learn perfectly, if not all, then the major part of at least simple medicines, and with the knowledge of Latin, in which he, from childhood, based his knowledge, then Dioscorides, Galen, Serapion, Mesue, Avicenna and the others, who speak about that matter.⁵²⁴

Ray explains the provenance and meaning of the word ‘*speziala*’ used by Herculiana to present herself in the title of the book, “female apothecary, at the Tre Stelle”⁵²⁵ by claiming: “While the term ‘*speziala*’ literally denotes a spicer, it often refers more broadly to spicer-apothecaries, indicating those who made and sold botanical and pharmaceutical remedies (which often included spices).”⁵²⁶ The profession of *speciale* is mentioned in Garzoni’s *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*, influential at the time, alongside the profession of alchemist, and in connection with the preparation of wax.⁵²⁷ *I speciali*, in fact, needed to possess a vast education, and today there is the expression in Italian ‘to write using letters of speciali’,⁵²⁸ which means to write and to express ideas clearly. Therefore, apart from the three identities prescribed for women (daughter, wife, mother) Herculiana had a profession for which she was paid – apothecary or *speciala*⁵²⁹ – and, moreover, she was an author, a woman author who discussed ideas from natural philosophy.

⁵²⁴ Quoted in Carinci, 207: Prospero Borgarucci, *La fabrica de gli spetiali, partita in dodici distiontini. Dove s’insegna a comporre perfettamente tutte le sorti de Medicamenti*, Venezia, Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1566, 6. In the original: “[lo speziale deve] sempre sforzarsi a conoscere perfettamente, se non tutte, la maggior parte almeno di tutte le medicine semplici, et con la cognitione della lingua Latina, nella quale egli da fanciullo deve esser fondato legge poi Dioscoride, Galeno, Serapione, Mesue, Avicenna, e altri, che parlano di tal materia”.

⁵²⁵ Ray, 2015, 115.

⁵²⁶ Ray, 2015, 115.

⁵²⁷ Tommaso Garzoni, *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*, In Seravalle di Venezia, Venezia, 1605, 509.

⁵²⁸ “Scrivere a lettere da speciali”.

⁵²⁹ Within this dissertation I will use the word *speciala* as it appears on the cover on Herculiana’s book. I believe that its meaning is broader than the meaning of the word ‘apothecary’, and covers both physican and apothecary.

Camilla Herculiana was educated and belonged to an educated family; her father was a merchant and one of her brothers graduated from the Faculty of Law in Padua. At the very beginning of her chapter on the life and work of Herculiana, Ray suggests that Herculiana, among other women covered by her study, tried to establish herself as “learned contributor[s] to public scientific discourse”.⁵³⁰ Women who in the sixteenth century wrote about natural philosophy are indeed very few. Apart from Lucrezia Marinella and Moderata Fonte whose work appeared later, in 1600, here Gondola’s work should be added, although in her case all the parts which refer to natural philosophy were copied from another text. Although, as concluded by Cox, Fonte’s *Merito* and Marinella’s works are quite different in structure, they are connected with the main idea, that “knowledge is empowering and that women’s exclusion from ‘science’ lies at the root of their subjection to men”.⁵³¹ To these texts included in Cox, should also be added some other texts written by women, which also deal with themes of natural philosophy, such as the sonnet written by Margherita Sarocchi (1581), who wrote in defence of Galileo’s discovery of the “Medicean star”.⁵³² Also there was Caterina Sforza, who wrote alchemical recipes, and Isabella Cortese, whose *I segreti* (1561) was dedicated to the Ragusan Mario Caboga and which represents an important book of recipes in the domain of medicine and cosmetics.⁵³³

The book *Lettere di philosophia naturale* (1584) was published in Kraków, Poland. The reasons for publishing the work there most likely relate to the cultural connections between Padua and Poland, and the fact that Padua was a university

⁵³⁰ Ray, 2015, 111.

⁵³¹ Cox, 2011.

⁵³² Ray, 2015.

⁵³³ See Massimo Rizzardini, “Lo strano caso della Signora Isabella Cortese, professoressa di secreti”, *Philosophia* 2, no. 1, 2010, pp. 45-84.

centre.⁵³⁴ It was between 1535 and 1586 that “the Polish Italophilia”⁵³⁵ had its peak. Poland as it exists today did not exist then, and it represented a mixture of different cultures. Even before Herculiana’s time, Sigismund I of Poland (1467–1548), who reigned as King of Poland and also as the Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1506 until 1548, had an Italian professor, Filippo Buonacorsi, who “was one of the first to bring the exclusive Roman humanism to the Slavs”.⁵³⁶ Later, Stephen Báthory (1533–1586), who was king of Poland from 1576 to 1586, continued the praxis of supporting the influence of Italian culture, and many students from Poland were sent to Italian Universities. The printing press and the distribution of literary works between the two countries also reinforced the already good cultural exchange. Herculiana’s book was published at the printing house Stamperia di Lazaro, which was also known under the name Officina Lazari. It was run by Jan Janusyowski, a former Paduan student, and was active from 1577 until 1613. He mainly published books in Latin.

3.2 Herculiana’s *Lettere di Philosophia* and its peritext

The entire body of Herculiana’s *Lettere di Philosophia* consists of the dedicatory poem “To Students of Philosophy”; a two and a half page long dedicatory epistle dedicated to Queen Anna of Poland, dated 25th February, 1584; two pages of the dedicatory text “to the reader” which can be read as a dedicatory epistle and as a preface; one Latin encomiastic poem, written by Andreas Schonaeus (Andrea Eumorphus Glogovicen); and four letters, of which three are signed by Herculiana.

The book opens with the unsigned dedicatory poem of ten verses “To Students of Philosophy”.⁵³⁷ The function of this poem should be highlighted, as already the first

⁵³⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁵³⁵ In the words of Carinci, 214.

⁵³⁶ Novak, 2009, 718: “čovjek koji je Slavenima među prvima donio ekskluzivni rimski humanizam.”

⁵³⁷ Herculiana, no pagination: “A Studiosi di Philosophia”.

page of the book limits its readership; it is dedicated to students of philosophy:

“paratextual arrangement can once again be seen to reflect the gendering of textuality more generally, as material and spatial elements of the text reinforce the fact that these voices are constructed, and always allied to and mediated through male poetic authority and agency”.⁵³⁸ According to Ray, gender relations and Herculiana’s contribution to the *querelle des femmes* should be taken into consideration when approaching this poem.

She writes:

As unsigned poetic composition in praise of the author, which precedes the dedicatory letter, further underscores the centrality of gender as a motivating force in the composition of Erculiani’s text. Addressed to “students of Philosophy”, the composition highlights the sex of the author in the first line (“As a woman, with the greatest ingenuity and skill”) and urges readers to spread her praise far and wide. In positioning her work in this way, Erculiani steps onto the battleground of the *querelle des femmes*[.]⁵³⁹

If we consider that students of philosophy were mainly men, then the male readers are requested to acknowledge her significance and perhaps even superiority and in their turn spread her fame.

“To Students of Philosophy” has ten verses and follows the rhyme scheme ABA ABC BB BB; it is not signed, and has a prefatory function. It might be assumed that it was written by Camilla Herculiana, as was common in the case of dedicatory verses at the beginnings of books, but the authorship of the poem is not certain. The presence of inclusive language might lead us to consider that it is written by the same Herculiana, but it also refers to her name in the third person, which might lead us to assign the

⁵³⁸ Danielle Clarke, “Gender and Paratext in the Complaint Genre”, Smith and Wilson, eds, 146.

⁵³⁹ Ray, 119.

authorship to somebody else. The writer of this poem invites scholars of philosophy to make praises of Camilla, to be heard from Mount Helicon and its springs,

While woman with highest genius and art
only partially ascends there where nature in us
its big effects produces, and gives to you,
who the learned letters place there right now
as such a woman between you ascends and urges you on,
you should from Helicon and its springs,
from Hesperia to Eoi,
make praises to be heard,
such as are worthy of Camilla, and of you too.⁵⁴⁰

In Greek mythology, the mountain Helicon, on which lie the two springs Aganippe and the Hippocrene, was considered the emblem of poetic inspiration. Hesperia (west) and Eoi (east) are metaphorically used in many writings during the early modern era, in order to refer to the wilderness and the immensity of the world. For example, we find the same in *Orlando furioso* (Canto I, VIII). In Ariosto, *esperii* refers to Hesperus, the western star, while Eoi refers to the goddess of dawn, Eos. Putting herself in a position alongside the philosophers, and asking the reader to spread word about her, can be understood as another self-authorial strategy. If the addressees are students of philosophy, it means that the author is actually one of them, because she goes on to write on such topics. However, here also the topos of modesty can be seen, when it is said that as a woman she ascends such “big effects” “only partially”. The same word “partially” will be repeated in the dedicatory epistle. The authorial self-

⁵⁴⁰ Herculiana, no pagination: “Mentre donna con sommo ingegno, et arte / Ascaende in parte, onde natura in noi / Li grandi effetti suoi, produce, e imparte, / Voi che le dotte charte / Volgendo ogni hor, la sù poggiate, poi / Che tal donna fra voi, v'accende e sprona, / Fate che di Helicon, e fonti suoi, / Da gli Hesperi, a gli Eoi / Lodi si sentan poi, / Di Camilla che sien degne, e di voi”.

fashioning in this dedicatory poem frames and introduces the book: the author presents herself as a learned female figure with a degree of humbleness, but ultimately with an appeal to all the male students of philosophy to spread her fame. Its importance lies more in its *performative* function, or in Genette's words the "illocutionary force of its message". On the surface of things, it may seem that the author of this poem performed her own lack of agency and inadequacy in the field of natural philosophy by stating that she is a woman, but at the same time this poem represents the self-conscious voice and was probably written by woman.

After the dedicatory poem, there follows a two and a half page long dedicatory epistle by Herculiana entitled "To the Most Serene Queen Anna Queen of Poland, Grand Duchess of Lithuania, etc".⁵⁴¹ It is signed in Padua, 25th February 1584. The dedicatee is a woman, Anna Jagiellon (1523–1596), who was Queen of Poland and Grand Duchess of Lithuania, from 1575 to 1586. Her father was the Polish King Sigismund I the Old, and she had an Italian mother, Bona Sforza.⁵⁴² She was the wife of Stephen Báthory, who was *jure uxoris* king of Poland from 1576 to 1586. The fact that "queen Anna was known for promoting the education of girls at her court in Krakow"⁵⁴³ is important, as well as the fact that her mother was Italian, which helped foster cultural connections with Italy.

Herculiana begins her dedicatory epistle by stating that already for many years she had wanted to meet the queen, but it never happened. But although she does not know her, "for the of reputation of her rare virtues",⁵⁴⁴ and as she did not have any other

⁵⁴¹ Herculiana, no pagination: "Alla serenissima regina Anna, Regina di Polonia, Gran Duchessa di Lihuania etc".

⁵⁴² Bona Sforza was respected in Italy, as patroness of culture, although accused of poisoning and love magic, as mentioned in Ray, 2015, 118. Also, the first letter by Isabella Sforza in Landi, 1549, is addressed to her.

⁵⁴³ Ray, 118.

⁵⁴⁴ Herculiana, no pagination: "se non per la fama delle sue rare virtù".

occasion or space, she decided to show affection towards her, stating: “Neither could I have considered my work to be good, if not dedicated to your Majesty”.⁵⁴⁵ Therefore the public dedicatee becomes the guarantor of the quality of the book. What follows is typical for the genre: a list of exempla from the past, women who were known because of their knowledge and goodness. Not surprisingly, like in the Latin poem (which will be analysed further), the three women of the ‘Nine worthies’⁵⁴⁶ appear. She compares Queen Anna with Tomyris, a Scythian queen, and added also queens Penthesilea and Semiramis. The next exemplum is the queen of Palmyra, Zenobia, with whom the Polish queen is compared in her military prowess and chastity.⁵⁴⁷ Herculiana finds it “superfluous to praise with dead scripts the living fame”,⁵⁴⁸ adding that Queen Anna was loved and respected by her people, as she heard from some of her compatriots, who are never tired “to preach in every place about your virtue, piety and justice”.⁵⁴⁹ It is worth noting that all of them are present in Boccaccio’s *Concerning Famous Women*, which in Italian translation appeared in 1596.

Using the topoi of the gift and of modesty at the same time, she writes how she decided to “recommend to you these few efforts of mine, believing in your generosity, which will not despise this small gift: being by a woman who wants to illustrate those

⁵⁴⁵ Herculiana, no pagination: “ho voluto con questa opera mostrarle in parte, quanto io desidero di far conoscer al mondo, l’affettion mia verso di quella, Ne mi pareva aver fatto opera buona, se non la dedicava a Vostra Maesta, la bontà, et la sapientia”.

⁵⁴⁶ See Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1965, 69; Huizinga explains the cult of ‘les neuf preux’, the cult of the Nine Worthies. He states: “The grouping of three pagans, three Jews, and three Christians in a sort of gallery of heroism is found for the first time in a work from the beginning of the fourteenth century, *Les Voeux du Paon*, by Jacques de Longuyon. The choice of the heroes betrays a close connection with the romances of chivalry. There are Hector, Ceasar, Alexander, Joshua, David, Judas Maccabaeus, Arthur, Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bouillon [...] The craving for symmetry, so strong in the Middle Ages, demanded that the series should be completed by counterparts of the female sex. Deschamps [Eustache Deschamps] satisfied the demand by choosing from fiction and history a group of rather bizarre heroines. Among them we find Penthesilea, Tomyris, Semiramis”.

⁵⁴⁷ Herculiana, no pagination: “in fatti d’arme, che nella castità si può dire che ella la avvanza”.

⁵⁴⁸ Herculiana, no pagination: “Mi parebbe superfluo il voler con scritti morti laudare la fama viva”.

⁵⁴⁹ Herculiana, no pagination: “Li quali non si stancano mai di predicare in ogni luoco la virtù, pietà et giustizia sua”.

contemporary women, which is in fact my wish”.⁵⁵⁰ I believe that this part might be useful to provide us with some more material regarding Herculiana’s reason for choosing such a powerful dedicatee. The dedicatory epistle proclaims a public relationship with the dedicatee, and thus we should ask what the responsibility of the person the work is addressed to consists of. The dedicatee is typically not only represented as the inspiration of the author, but also as one who should accept the present and be generous. This fact might suggest that Herculiana wanted something in return. As “the dedicatory epistle was regularly counted among a writer’s sources of income [...] So the dedication was generally a tribute that was remunerated, either by protection of the feudal type or by the more bourgeois (or proletarian) coin of the realm”.⁵⁵¹

It is known and historically confirmed that Queen Anna’s husband supported many works of art, and financed the production of scientific works. The offering of the book as a present to a person who had some kind of power was often highly important for the author, as it was difficult to guarantee the income of books, as suggested by Lodovica Braidà.⁵⁵² Usually, then, the authors would search for a patron, and the attendant status that having a patron would bring. Braidà explains that, in that way, “the dedication becomes part of the logic of the restitution of the gift (donated by patron) and reveals the power and the modalities of the relationship by means of which is maintained the still-fragile ‘republic of letters’”.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵⁰ Herculiana, no pagination: “Ho voluto raccomandargli queste mie poche fatiche, fidandomi nella generosità sua, che non sprezzierà il piccolo dono: benché di donna che desidera di illustrare quelle de suoi tempi, che tale in vero è il desiderio mio”.

⁵⁵¹ Genette, 119.

⁵⁵² Braidà, 71.

⁵⁵³ Braidà, 72: “da questo punto di vista, la dedica se iscrive in una logica di restituzione di un dono (elargito dal mecenate) e rivela i rapporti di potere e le modalità attraverso le quali si regge l’ancora fragile ‘repubblica delle lettere’”.

As in the other dedicatory epistles, what follows is *causa scribendi*. In Herculiana's words, her intent was "to show the world that we women are as capable as men in every area of knowledge [*scientie*]"⁵⁵⁴ This statement echoes Maria Gondola's words, but also many others, as the topos of apology is written into the genre of prefaces and dedicatory epistles. In order to prove her statement, what follows is one more list of exempla, although much shorter than Gondola's, but obviously exhibiting the same influences. It is this part which led Ray to come up with the hypothesis that Herculiana could have known Gondola/Di Gozze's text. This theory should not be completely discarded, but in my opinion, it is more likely that they simply shared many of the same influences. *Libro di Marco Aurelio* is a likely source of this shared influence; see for instance Herculiana's references to Mirthis as a giant woman, mentioning that she is put together with seven Lydian kings because of her eloquence and knowledge. She goes further, pointing out the importance of Nicostrata's erudition, and Cornelia's doctrine. Gondola made use of Mirthis and Cornelia, but when referring to Nicostrata she uses her name Carmenta. Both of them repeated the mistake which we find in De Guevara's book, that Carmenta/Nicostrata was Evander's wife. In fact, she was Evander's mother.

The *narratio* continues with the topos of the gift: "I wanted to send under the shadow of your majesty these my few 'vigilia'⁵⁵⁵, being convinced by many of your compatriots, that you would like it, as you are very virtuous and a lover of sciences."⁵⁵⁶ She refers to her work as her "few nights" or later "my efforts", and, following that, she writes without her usual modesty that if the dedicatee reads it, she would find in this

⁵⁵⁴ As translated by Ray, 119.

⁵⁵⁵ "Nights without sleep".

⁵⁵⁶ Herculiana, no pagination: "Ho voluto mandare sotto l'ombra di V.M. queste mie poche vigilie, essendo fatta certissima da molti delli suoi creati, che li seranno grate, per conoscerla virtuosissima, et amatrice delle scinetie."

book “things worthy of beautiful intellects”.⁵⁵⁷ Immediately she added details about the topic of her book, as the reader can learn much about “the truth of the flood, the reason why people mutated, and the true reason for the appearance of the rainbow”.⁵⁵⁸ The topos of truthfulness is “the only aspect of treatment an author can give himself credit for in the preface, undoubtedly because conscience rather than talent is involved, is truthfulness or, at the very least, sincerity – and that is the effort to achieve truthfulness”.⁵⁵⁹

In the conclusion, the figure of the privileged reader appears once again. She states that all these themes should be considered by “illustrious persons and those who reign the world”.⁵⁶⁰ Wishing Queen Anna and her husband happiness and good health, she adds that her first intention was to dedicate the book to his Majesty the King, Anna’s husband, but in the end she did not want to bother him with her work. She adds that she knows that Queen Anna is apt to defend this work from malevolent people. In this manner, the queen (and indirectly the king) become the protectors of her work, “as tribute to a protector and/or benefactor (acquired or hoped for, whom one tries to acquire with the tribute itself”.⁵⁶¹ Herculiana closes the dedicatory epistle with these words:

I pray God to keep your happiness for a long time, together with your consort, to whose Majesty I thought to dedicate this work; but knowing that he was occupied in the wars, I did not want to give him this labour, as I get to know that

⁵⁵⁷ Herculiana, no pagination: “Li troverà cose degne di belli intelletti”.

⁵⁵⁸ Herculiana, no pagination: “Della verità del diluvio, della causa della mutatione delli huomini, et la vera causa dell’apparitione del arco celeste”.

⁵⁵⁹ Genette, 206.

⁵⁶⁰ Herculiana, no pagination: “cose tutte degne da essere considerate da persone illustre, et che reggono il mondo”.

⁵⁶¹ Genette, 118.

also you are very apt to defend this work from the malevolent. From Padua, on 25th February 1584, your affectionate servant Camilla Herculiana è Gregetta.⁵⁶²

The dedication “To the readers”⁵⁶³ is the most interesting part of Herculiana’s paratext. The dedication to the reader, that is, to the real addressee of the work, has two functions in this case: it is a dedicatory epistle while still fulfilling the prefatory function. This peritext, almost two pages long, opens with a clear use of the rhetorical device *causa scribendi*, and the topos of modesty regarding the work:

It will without doubt marvel somebody, that *me a woman* [my emphasis] decided to write and publish things which do not belong (according to customs of our time) to woman: but if they want to consider, with good judgement and without any affection the change with the times and states, and people, and the material of which they are made; they will understand that the woman does not lack those providences and virtues which it is possible to find in men: and it is clear that they can marvel a lot that I without seeing the books, decided to publish these few badly composed lines.⁵⁶⁴

Being a woman she needed to defend her appearance in print, and like the other two women authors, she includes this statement in the exordium. What is interesting here is the rhetorical usage of the parenthetical device in order to point out the fact that it was according to the custom of the present day, of the contemporary moment, and it might mean that before it was not like that, and also it might introduce hope that in the future

⁵⁶² Herculiana, no pagination: “Prego il S. Iddio, la mantenghi felice longo tempo insieme col Serenis. Suo consorte, alla Maestà, delquale haveva proposto di dedicare quest’opera; ma conoscendo la occupata nelle guerre, non ho voluto darli questo travaglio, poi ch’ho conosciuto V. M. Essere ancora lei attissima a difendere questa opera da malivoli”.

⁵⁶³ Herculiana, no pagination: “A lettori”.

⁵⁶⁴ Herculiana, no pagination: “Parrà senza dubio maraviglia ad alcuno, ch’io donna mi sia posta a scrivere e dare alla stampa cose che non s’appartengono (secondo l’uso de’ nostri tempi) a donna, ma se vorranno, con buon giuditio, e senza affettatione considerar la mutatione de tempi, e delli stati, e de gl’huomini, e con qual materia sian creati; troverà che non è la donna priva di quelle providenze e virtù che si sian gl’huomini: è vero che si potranno molto maravigliar ch’io senza veder libri, m’abbia posta a dar fuori queste quattro mal composte righe”.

it would be different. Using almost the same phrase construction as Gondola/Camerata, she invites the reader to think rationally.

Following the typical topos of modesty, “without seeing the books”, the author Herculiana nevertheless decided to publish this book. But at the same time, she feels the need to defend the very idea of it. Very similar topoi can be found in Gondola’s and Speranza di Bona’s⁵⁶⁵ writing. Herculiana explains that she would prefer not to print her book at this specific moment, she would rather wait and publish it when God wanted it to be done. But the person whom she trusted, and sent her work to, decided to print the work under his name. The same ‘excuse’ can be found in the work by Di Bona, and this statement should also be understood as the modesty topos.⁵⁶⁶ She fashions herself as naïve and having only good intentions. But she also decided to bring out her work because with book publishing she has the possibility to “show the good soul of today’s Women, something that I really wanted to do”.⁵⁶⁷ She continues that it would be important to understand what the soul is, “what, where, and when, and in which virtue our soul was generated”.⁵⁶⁸

This, as a complicated topic, can be understood only by the privileged reader. Herculiana writes: “It will be with no doubt difficult to prove this to somebody, but to the intelligent ones it will not seem but truthful”.⁵⁶⁹ Therefore, the reader is the privileged one, the only one who can understand the truth that is contained in Herculiana’s book. Using the topos of the gift, Herculiana offers her work, naming it

⁵⁶⁵ See next chapter.

⁵⁶⁶ Castiglione, 2013, 4. In his dedicatory epistle to Don Michel de Silva, Castiglione writes that some people in Naples who saw the manuscript tried to publish it. The same reason for printing the book is present in Speranza di Bona’s dedicatory epistle. See Chapter 4.

⁵⁶⁷ Herculiana, no pagination: “Di far conoscere il buon animo delle donne di nostri tempi, cosa invero da me molto desiderata”.

⁵⁶⁸ Herculiana, no pagination: “che cosa, e dove, e quando, et, in qual virtù si generi l’anima nostra”.

⁵⁶⁹ Herculiana, no pagination: “Parrà senza dubbio difficile il provar questo ad alcuni, ma agl’intelligenti non parerà cosa fuori verità”.

“few rows” or “effort”, to the reader.⁵⁷⁰ The closing of this part is interesting, as here also, as well as in her letters at the very end, she introduces the private component, in this case regarding her family, her husband, and her children.

Offering her work as a gift to the reader, but saying that she also offers some ideas which are not so easy to understand, Herculiana wanted once again to present herself as an educated woman. And in undertaking this intellectual endeavour, she was often interrupted by “*travagli*”, which Ray translated as “works”. Its actual meaning is a bit more nuanced; it is more like a difficult work which provokes anguish. The same word is used in Castiglione’s *Il libro del Cortegiano*, also in line with the topos of modesty and the reason that the work could not have been done before.⁵⁷¹ As Camilla Herculiana says:

the work of caring for my children, the burden of running my household, my obedience to my husband, and my fragile health – none of these weighs on my decision to publish so much as the knowledge that many malicious minds will condemn my efforts, and writings, and consider them frivolous and worthless just as they consider women of our age to be such.⁵⁷²

She moreover refers to her roles of mother, housewife and wife, adding that her health was not good, but adds that these are not reasons to complain. What she complains about, just as Gondola and Di Bona do, is the fact that others, probably men, will not take her work seriously, and will diminish its value, as is often done with the work done by women. Then she continues, in the line of the topoi of the *querelle des femmes*:

“Despite all this I will not cease working to recover the honour [even] of those women who have forgotten it, and perhaps I will be the catalyst for the reawakening of their

⁵⁷⁰ Herculiana, no pagination: “le fatiche”, “poche righe”.

⁵⁷¹ Castiglione, 3.

⁵⁷² Translated in Ray, 120-121.

intellect”.⁵⁷³ In order to conclude, she adds a bit of hope. Clearly she refers here to the widely accepted Aristotelian ideas on female imperfection, and believes that the privileged reader will understand her intentions and ideas, stating:

And I am certain that if they knew this, no gentleman would dare come to the brave city of Padua to accuse us women, with sword and lance, of imperfection: and I am further certain that many wise and intelligent readers will not mock the innovation of this work, and will admire my determination.⁵⁷⁴

It is a clear example of entering the *querelle des femmes*, with a positive approach, knowing that there are readers (men) who would understand that women are also capable of contributing to culture, science, and knowledge in general. Knowing that her work is something new, she finishes with the hope that she will be accepted. I believe that this short dedication to the reader represents valuable testimony on gender hierarchies and “the stands taken in the relevant areas of the discussion that were topical during each period”.⁵⁷⁵ Here we see how it was considered rare to have a woman publishing her work, and that women as well as men could reason and think about the soul, and philosophical themes. She finishes this epistle with the sentence: “Live happily”.⁵⁷⁶

Following the dedicatory text, just before the letters, the epigraphic poem in Latin, an example of “*carmen encomiasticon*”,⁵⁷⁷ encomiastic poem, introduces the book and eulogises Camilla Herculiana. In this poem Herculiana is compared with the Amazon queens Hippolyta and Penthesilea, and to Semiramis, Queen of Babylon. As already mentioned, these queens belonged to the “nine female worthies”, very popular

⁵⁷³ Translated in Ray, 122.

⁵⁷⁴ Translated in Ray, 121.

⁵⁷⁵ Zimmerman, 19.

⁵⁷⁶ Herculiana, no pagination: “Vivete felici”.

⁵⁷⁷ Herculiana, no pagination; in Latin: “Andeae Eumorphi Glogovicen. Carmen Encomiasticon”.

at the time, possible to find also in Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*. Her individual accomplishments are recounted, on the basis that she is knowledgeable and educated. This poem was written by Silesian academic Andreas Schonaeus⁵⁷⁸ (1522–1615), who studied philosophy in Padua and lived in Kraków. He was connected with the Officina Lazzari printing press, and he was one of the curators of one of the editions of Albertus Magnus's *Summa philosophiae naturalis* (1587); therefore his presence should also be connected with the fact that the Camilla Herculiana's book was published outside Padua, in Kraków. Among other things, he published poems on the death of the Polish king, as well as many epigrams in honour of famous people.

3.3 Letters

Following the encomiastic poem, the title of the book appears again, as well as its subtitle, where Herculiana's profession is mentioned: *speciala* at the *Tre stelle* in Padua, and what follows are four letters on natural philosophy. The title of each letter contains information about the subject of it. The first and the longest one (12 pages without numeration), signed by Herculiana on 7th August 1577, treats “the natural cause of the Flood, and the natural temper of man”.⁵⁷⁹ It is addressed to French physician Giorgio Garnero. His identity (as well as the identity of every other person whose name appears in the book) is established by Carinci: Garnero was from Burgundy, and was a medical writer and physician. He was also the addressee of Camilla's second letter, which remained without answer. The importance in choosing Garnero as one of two addressees is twofold. Firstly, Giorgio Garnero (1550–1614) published a book about the

⁵⁷⁸ His life and work have been reconstructed by Carinci, 2013.

⁵⁷⁹ Herculiana, no pagination: “All'Eccelletis. Sig. Giorgio Garnero, nel'laquale si tratta la natural causa del Diluvio, et il natural temperamento dell'huomo”.

plague,⁵⁸⁰ which was popular, and secondly, he was a student at the Paduan university in 1576.⁵⁸¹ That Camilla Herculiana had contacts with the university through the apothecary and through her husband's and brother's connections is also proved by Carinci. In the first letter, which should be understood as the part of *exordium* where the author expresses the *causa scribendi*, she explains that she was provoked by discussion with an illustrious man, and using the *captatio benevolentiae* she contradicts his idea of original sin. The illustrious man claimed that if Adam had not sinned, mankind would live forever. Provoked by this, Herculiana provided her own interpretation of natural origin and connects it with the Flood, stating that, as the number of people was growing, and they were overusing the material of the soul, the Deluge occurred to make an equilibrium between the elements. She relies on different authorities and discusses the structure of the soul, the influence of planets, and the causes of the Flood, resting on Aristotelian and Galenic ideas.

The human body, according to Herculiana, should be understood as “the small world”⁵⁸² or microcosm, inseparable from the macrocosm of the world. This was the doctrine inherited from humoral theory, and was popular in the Paduan context at the time. In order to convince the reader of the truthfulness of her words, she frequently uses indirect speech. Following a dialogical structure, she actually narrates the facts as they happen (i.e. I told him and then he replied to me), therefore all letters can be read as a kind of indirect dialogue between Herculiana and the “illustrious sir”. Although strictly speaking these are not dialogues, the structure of the letters echoes the dialogue form. For example, the first letter can also be divided into several days during which the

⁵⁸⁰ Carinci, 209: “*Liber de peste quae grassata est Venetiis anno 1576 et Bruntruti anno 1582*, testo irreperibile, di cui è conservata alla British Library e alla Countway Library of Medicine di Boston un’epitome pubblicata a Porrentruy, in Svizzera, nel 1610”.

⁵⁸¹ Carinci, 209.

⁵⁸² Herculiana, no pagination: “questo corpo, che mondo picciolo si chiama”.

supposed conversation happened. She explains that her interlocutor did not want to listen to her the previous day, but they continued their conversation the day after.⁵⁸³

Hence, a double dialogue can be found here, the one between Herculiana the author and the addressee of her work, and the second one within the same text.

She is familiar with the main ideas of humoral theory, for example that illness is explained as a lack of balance. If there is a lack of one of the elements in the body, people become ill. As for different animals, different elements are ascribed to them and these are followed by their main characteristics. For example, she writes that the ox is connected with the element of the soul, and therefore its characteristics are big, indolent, ignorant, and operating.⁵⁸⁴ After taking examples from animals, she comes to humans, explaining that elements have an influence on people's characteristics: if dominated by fire, they become choleric (Sun), by earth – low intelligence (Moon), by water – melancholic (Venus), or by air – high intelligence, eloquence (Mercury).⁵⁸⁵ Then she introduces the main ideas of astrology, stating that planets are the main influence on the elements, but that the planets “influence, they do not force”.⁵⁸⁶ Subsequently, she refers to Aristotle's ideas of understanding the soul as a ‘*tabula rasa*’ on which everything is ingrained, comparing the perfection of the soul in the child and in the adult, and how the soul should relate to the body. The elements are changing – growing within one person until one point, and then because of those elements, and not because of the soul, people possess certain characteristics. To prove her statement, she provides examples from everyday life, for example comparing old and young people. She finishes her first letter by saying that “now I weary with our Galen, because I write nature, property and

⁵⁸³ Herculiana, no pagination: “ma lui non volse più ascoltare per quel giorno, ma l'altro volsi seguire il mio ragionamento”.

⁵⁸⁴ Herculiana, no pagination: “anzi il bue ne riesce l'essere grande pigro, ignorante, et operante”.

⁵⁸⁵ Herculiana, no pagination: “E quando regna Mercurio, signor dell'aria, all'ora si generano gl'huomini d'aspetto chiaro, eloquenti, temperati, agili, di elevato ingegno”.

⁵⁸⁶ Herculiana, no pagination: “Ma per inclinatione de pianeti, poiché inclinano ma non sforzano”.

quality of the ingredients which enter in theriac, and with which characteristics they can be useful against poisons”.⁵⁸⁷ She finishes this letter by introducing the private complaint about her stressful life, and the impossibility of writing as much as she would like, adding that together with this letter, her husband Giacomo sends to Garnerio a “small jar of theriac, which we prepared this year”.⁵⁸⁸

The answer by Giorgio Garnerio in a letter of the same length (12 pages, dated 7th September 1577, from Venice) deals with the negation of the Flood.⁵⁸⁹ Referring to the Stoics and how they also encouraged women to “philosophize”,⁵⁹⁰ he commends Camilla Herculiana for her reasoning, and vast knowledge:⁵⁹¹

Even more worthy of praise are those few men, and very few women, who with great ingenuity dedicate themselves completely to learning and to sciences, labouring [...] believing that it is far more worthy to investigate and understand the reasons behind natural and divine things than to acquire wealth, honour, and other impermanent and vain things. Among whose number you must be counted, (since) you care so deeply for the sciences and for virtue, deeming all other things other than the natural world vain and worthless.⁵⁹²

He then refers to the discussion she had, confirming or contradicting her ideas. In explaining his point of view, he draws from the New Testament. In the second part, he refers to Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates, and the theory of the four elements, to come

⁵⁸⁷ Herculiana, no pagination: “Hora mi affattico con il nostro Galeno, perch’io scrivo la natura, proprietà, e qualità de gl’ingredienti ch’entrano nella Teriaca, et con quali proprietà siano loro giovevoli contro i veleni”.

⁵⁸⁸ Herculiana, no pagination: “M. Giacomo le manda un vasetto di Teriaca et è di quella istessa ch’abbiamo fatto quest’anno”.

⁵⁸⁹ Herculiana, no pagination: “Lettera dell’eccellentissimo Sig. Giorgio Garnerio, nella quale si tratta la negatione del Diluvio”.

⁵⁹⁰ Herculiana, no pagination: “philosophare”.

⁵⁹¹ Herculiana, no pagination: “Tra i quali meritevolmente V.S. deve esser annumerata, per haver così a cuore le scienze e virtù, riputando lei tutte l’altre cose baie vane, e di nissun valore, fuor che saper le cose naturali, e che sia vero lo dimostrano le sue a me scritte, le quali per mi fè mi sono più care d’ogni altra cosa, sì per veder il suo mirabile e felicissimo ingegno, come ancora per conoscere che V.S. si degna communicar meco le sue così altissime e profundissime ricchezze”.

⁵⁹² Ray, 128.

to the “twelve opinions about soul”. He closes his letter, using the typical topos of modesty “to conclude I would affectionately ask you with all my heart, to excuse me, being myself inept in some other things”.⁵⁹³ It is important to add here that he asked her to send him the answer letter she sent to the Illustrious Sir Montagnana del Sole, which as was case in the previous letter, can be interpreted as one more proof of possible material letter circulation.

On the following nine pages, dated 9th November 1577, Camilla Herculiana in answer to Giorgio Garnero discusses “the truth of the flood, the natural formation and appearance of the rainbow”.⁵⁹⁴ Following the topos of modesty, at the very beginning of the letter, Herculiana refers to one error she made which Garnero corrected, saying that she knows naturally, without looking to either Galen or Aristotle.⁵⁹⁵ This insistence on her experience and practical knowledge could be understood in the line of self-fashioning, which is obvious from the title to the very end. Carinci⁵⁹⁶ suggests that the double importance of these kinds of affirmations should be taken into consideration. On one hand, there is proof of attention, moving from Aristotle towards the new philosophical ideas. And on the other hand, these kind of affirmations highlight “the author’s will to the self-affirmation as the subject who thinks”.⁵⁹⁷ Also in this letter she finishes with a lamentation, a private complaint. She does not have enough time to dedicate to writing, mentioning that she wrote something about the sun, but that she did not have enough time to copy it.

⁵⁹³ Herculiana, no pagination: “Per concludere pregarovi affettuosamente con il tutto il core, mi perdoni, essendo io impeditissimo in certe altre cosette”.

⁵⁹⁴ Herculiana, no pagination: “Lettera di Camilla Herculiana all’Eccellentis. Sig. Giorgio Garnero, nellaqual si tratta della verità del diluvio, e della natural formatione et apparitione dell’arco celeste”.

⁵⁹⁵ Herculiana, no pagination: “e questo lo conosco naturalmente, senza guardare Galeno ne Aristotele”.

⁵⁹⁶ Carinci, 230.

⁵⁹⁷ Carinici, 221: “Affermazioni di questo genere sono doppiamente importanti: da un lato mettono in evidenza il cambiamento dei tempi e il processo di sradicamento dall’autorità aristotelica messa in atto da molti filosofi naturali del tempo che porterà alla nuova scienza. Dall’altro sottolineano la volontà di autoaffermazione dell’autrice come soggetto pensante”.

The fourth and last letter is signed by Camilla Herculiana from home, on 9th April, 1581. The addressee is Martin di Berzevicze,⁵⁹⁸ the chancellor of King Stephen,⁵⁹⁹ Queen Anna Jagiellon's husband and *jure uxoris* King of Poland. It seems that King Stephen also spent a few months at the University of Padua in 1549. This is the only letter where the subject is not mentioned in the title, and there is no answer to it. Regarding her writing and attempts to provide the best picture of herself, she mentions that what she does is read other authors in order to understand and consequently to develop her own ideas,⁶⁰⁰ but claims she would never use somebody else's words as her own. The closure of this letter is very significant, as here she explains that she decided to write to her addressee because she cannot speak, "being bothered by *terzana*⁶⁰¹ already for three months".⁶⁰²

As already said, it seems that this letter exchange existed, although at this stage it cannot be proved. According to Ray, it was the authorial intention to make the exchange of letters to appear to be real correspondence, as Herculiana in her letter to Garnero asks him to bring her back the letter she sent to him. "Although her argumentation is essentially monologic, it is packaged as an epistolary exchange with Garnero, immediately establishing the appearance of a real correspondence – whether or not one actually existed."⁶⁰³ Ray also points out that the form of the letter has similar characteristics to dialogue: "like dialogue, it allows for the strategic presentation of an

⁵⁹⁸ Also his stay in Padua is proved by Carinci's research.

⁵⁹⁹ Herculiana, no pagination: "Al magnifico et eccellentissimo Sig. Cavaliero, il Sig. Martino di Berzevicze, Cancelliere Transilvano della sacra Maesta dell'invittissimo Stephano Re di Polonia".

⁶⁰⁰ Herculiana, no pagination: "Rispondo e gli dico havere apresso autore alcuno letto, né credo che sia cosa lodevole il scrivere l'opinione d'altri autori come sua propria; non nego ch'io non legga diversi autori speculando le diffinitioni loro, in quanto può passare il senso nostro, dove maravigliata de gl'ingegni e varie opinioni loro, mi son posta anch'io a scrivere il parer mio".

⁶⁰¹ Terzana (Lat: tertanius) is the fever which appears every third day, see: tlio.oiv.cnr.it/TLIO.

⁶⁰² Herculiana, no pagination: "per esser molestata d'una terzana già tre mesi".

⁶⁰³ Ray, 122.

argument and consideration of a topic's multiple facets". The epistolary genre was in some cases strategically used to escape censorship, as suggested by Carinci.⁶⁰⁴

But the importance of these letter exchanges, be they fictitious or real, can be seen in the subject of the woman who writes and who takes responsibility for her words. She was completely aware of the possibility that she, because of her book, might be questioned before the Inquisition, and because of that she chose a powerful dedicatee, and clearly defined her audience: students of philosophy. The topics are scientific and philosophical, but in both the peritext and in the letters some private, everyday themes appeared. She provides us with information regarding her lack of time for writing, her stressful life, the production of theriac, and also about her illness. The image of the woman who writes is reinforced by her referring to her work as effort in the dedicatory epistle, or "the reasoning"⁶⁰⁵ in her letters. Moreover, the insisting on epistolary exchange might be understood in line with the topos of work exchange, and the letter as the means of securing the image of being an educated, knowledgeable woman who enters in discussion with intellectuals.

In her philosophical ideas on the structure of the soul, the influence of the planets, and the causes of the Deluge, Camilla Herculiana mainly relies on Aristotle's and Galen's philosophy and medicine, which were very popular during the sixteenth century, mainly because of vernacular translations by Antonio Brucioli.⁶⁰⁶ Another motivation for the reliance on Aristotle may have been that Padua University was Aristotelian in its nature. It was in this century, as pointed out by Cox, that women's interest in the *querelle des femmes*, especially in the Venetian area.⁶⁰⁷ Herculiana

⁶⁰⁴ See Nick Wilding, "Manuscripts in Motion: The Diffusion of Galileian Copernicanism", *Italian Studies*, 66.2, 2011.

⁶⁰⁵ Herculiana, no pagination: "ragionamento".

⁶⁰⁶ See: "Vernacular Aristotelianism in Renaissance Italy c. 1400–c. 1650", available at: www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/projects/vernaculararistotelianism.

⁶⁰⁷ Cox, 2011, 237.

alludes also to Plato's philosophy, and his theory of recollection expressed in *Phaedo*, as suggested by Maude Vanhaelen.⁶⁰⁸ She provides this with the translation of one passage from Herculiana's first letter to Garnero:

He replied, drawing on Plato, that the soul enters into these bodies full of wisdom and knowing all things, but forgets [everything] because of the veil of the body, and then, by being in continuous contact with the body, it progressively remembers all things, and that from the beginning all things were created in that way.⁶⁰⁹

As pointed out by Vanhaelen, this is important testimony that one woman used Platonist ideas, which were different from the most popular ideas of love and beauty. That fact “invites us to reconsider the importance of the direct (rather than ‘eclectic’) transmission of a *Platone volgare* in sixteenth-century Italy, particularly in the context of female medical and scientific writings”.⁶¹⁰

Among the contemporaries of Camilla Herculiana, Carinci mentions the important work written by Alessandro Piccolomini, very popular and circulating all over Europe at the time, *Della bella creanza delle donne*, (1555). From the other side, Ray notices that:

Erculiani's *Letters on Natural Philosophy* employs many of the same rhetorical strategies and even some of the same language in making science a new weapon to be wielded in the *querelle des femmes*. Given that Erculiani cites Aristotle's *Meteorology* in her *Letters* – and that di Gozze, like Erculiani, treats the

⁶⁰⁸Vanhaelen, 140.

⁶⁰⁹ Herculiana, no pagination: “Rispose egli secondo Platone, che l'anima discende in questi corpi scientissima e dotta di tutte le cose, ma che per il velame di questo corpo si scorda, e che poi per il lungo habitare insieme a poco a poco viene a ricordarsi tutte le cose, e che dal principio furono create tutte tali”.

⁶¹⁰ Vanhaelen, 145.

universal flood in his *Discourses* – it is possible that Erculiani may even have known the Gondola / di Gozze text.⁶¹¹

She also introduces the hypothesis that Di Gozze and Herculiana could have met in Padua, as “Di Gozze spent time in Padua as student; it is possible there could have even been a personal connection if the two had occasion to cross paths”.⁶¹² Both hypotheses are in my opinion just speculations, which should be excluded; moreover the dedicatory epistle signed by Gondola does not introduce the book on natural philosophy by her husband.

I believe that the Italian translation of *Libro aureo* and *Relox de principes* was one of the works which influenced Herculiana’s list of exempla, and it is this influence that accounts for the connection with Gondola’s and Camerata’s text, rather than a personal connection with Di Gozze’s stay in Padua, which cannot be proved. As already seen, the Italian translation, entitled *Libro aureo*, first appeared in 1542, and the second Italian translation appeared just two years later, with the title *Vita, gesti, costumi, discorsi, lettere di M. Aurelio imperatore, sapientissimo filosofo & oratore eloquentissimo*, Vinegia, 1544. Both these editions were very popular, not only on the Italian peninsula but all over Europe, so much so that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries more than 200 editions of the book appeared in Dutch, English, German, and Latin.⁶¹³

3.4 Two letters addressed to Herculiana

The discovery by Maude Vanhaelen of two still unpublished letters by Sebastiano Erizzo (1525–1585), the Venetian humanist and numismatic, enriches the data on

⁶¹¹ Ray, 114.

⁶¹² Ray, 222.

⁶¹³ Lynn Lara Westwater, “Humanism Reworked: The Reuse of Guevara’s *Relox de Principes* in Doni’s *Marmi*”, ed. Cherchi, 1998b, 39-62.

Camilla Herculiana, and provides material testimony on the letter exchange.

Additionally, in Vanhaelen's words, they provide "unique insight into the diffusion of vernacular Platonism in female scientific writings, and the debate on the condition of women that took place in sixteenth-century Padua".⁶¹⁴ Sebastiano Erizzo gained his knowledge at the University of Padua, and as noted by Vanhaelen he was connected with two academies which were promoting the reading of ancient authors in the vernacular, the *Accademia degli Infiammati* in Padua and the *Accademia Veneziana* in Venice.

The two letters addressed to Camilla Herculiana are preserved in manuscript in the Biblioteca Bertoliana in Vicenza.⁶¹⁵ The letters are written in the same year her book appeared, 1584. The first letter is dated 11th January, and the second 18th February. In the first letter Erizzo thanks her for sending him one of her letters, along with "your very learned philosophical work", which might be the book of letters, or perhaps some other work still unknown to us. He, like Garnerio, admires her ability in philosophy, stating that he "would not have easily believed that there would be in our time a woman with such expertise in the study of philosophy, had I not read your letters".⁶¹⁶ What follows is Erizzo's expression of gratitude, where he states: "I should thank you for the high esteem in which you hold me and for writing that you have learnt in my works all you know about the Platonic doctrine."⁶¹⁷ This is evidence supporting Vanhaelen's conclusion that Herculiana read Plato from Erizzo's 1574 translation, though she did not quote it from there.

⁶¹⁴ Vanhaelen, 137.

⁶¹⁵ Vanhaelen, 138: Manuscript G 3 8 7 (277) in the Biblioteca Bertoliana di Vicenza. For a detailed description of the manuscript, see S. Zoppi, *Sebastiano Erizzo. Lettera sulla poesia*, Florence, Olschski, 1989, pp. 8-11, with a list of all named addressees, pp. 71-74.

⁶¹⁶ Translated in Vanhaelen, 139.

⁶¹⁷ Translated in Vanhaelen, 139.

The second letter, which is more interesting for this thesis, provides us with Erizzo's comments on Herculiana's ideas on the woman question, which this still-unpublished letter positions in the context of the *querelle des femmes*. Erizzo refers to her observations, not found in the book of letters, regarding the idea that women should only be connected with the identity of the mother, as the Bible states, that women should be treated as goddesses and not be bound to any law, and that women should also be able to inherit some possessions. He defends female equality, stating that:

Therefore, how will we be able to reasonably argue that God's law prescribed women to devote themselves to nothing else than bearing and giving birth to human beings, and that His divine majesty exempted them from any other human preoccupations and activities? This opinion is contrary to the Sacred Scriptures, which give woman part of the dominion over the sensible world, so that she may act together with man; neither would the supreme Providence give to one of its creatures such an idle role, nor does women's exemption from any worldly activity appear to be expressed by any law in the Sacred Scriptures.⁶¹⁸

Invoking the authority of Plato, and his *Republic*, Erizzo states that women are and should always be considered as equal to men, adding that it is known that somewhere in the north, women do the same things as men, such as in the Flanders. For the second doubt expressed by Herculiana, he writes:

I then read in this letter [he refers to Herculiana's letter sent to him] another argument that states the following: 'This being well known to these divine men, they wrote laws and statutes in favour of women, as they did not wish to force them to respect any additional theological precepts, but letting them as if they were goddesses, they did not dare to bind these women to any law'. On this

⁶¹⁸ Vanhaelen, 143.

point, I would rather think that you are kidding me and that this is not your own opinion: but if it were, I would ask you to let me know which author, ancient or modern, has expressed this idea in his writings, and quote him as proof that what you say is true.⁶¹⁹

Following this statement, he again quotes words she wrote elsewhere that women “have decided to no longer be subjugated to man’s yoke unless they are given a good part of their possessions; and they have done so to force men to treat them fairly”.⁶²⁰ And he answers that he would be very happy if such a law existed anywhere. Vanhaelen suggests in her latest study that the obvious lack of regard for religious propriety which can be seen in this letter might be the additional reason Herculiana was interrogated in front of the Inquisition: “The arguments she appears to have put forward to Erizzo, absent from her published work, suggest that she had little concern for religious orthodoxy. This might also explain why the Inquisition later questioned her”.⁶²¹

As already mentioned, the usage of the written word in the form of the letter was a genre often used by women in the Italian context in the sixteenth century. In letters, patronage relations become obvious, along with the dialogical character, which might be interpreted as one of the strategies of escaping censorship. As suggested by Frajese, the dialogue was the method used by writers who wanted to show the multiplicity of different aspects of proper thought.⁶²² In Herculiana’s letters the interlocutors are males, mainly addressed as friends, which is also part of self-fashioning and the impersonation of the concept of *amicitia*. Metatextual data provided at the end of all of Herculiana’s letters provides important testimony on private networks (she mentions her husband),

⁶¹⁹ Vanhaelen, 143.

⁶²⁰ Vanhealen, 143.

⁶²¹ Vanhaelen, 144.

⁶²² Frajese, 73.

and the private issues, such as mentioning her constant lack of time. She also provides *excusatio* for not being able to write as much as she wanted.

As suggested by Quondam,⁶²³ the rhetorical choice within the epistolary genre always shows some kind of relationship, at the very least “the exemplarity, in the first place, of the network of relations and personal connections, and therefore the exemplarity of the intellectual and cultural experience”,⁶²⁴ between the private and the public domain of life. Camilla Herculiana, with this letter collection, identifies herself as somebody who does belong to the republic of letters.

3.5 Censorship

Because of some of her ideas expressed in this book, Herculiana was suspected of heresy and interrogated by the Inquisition. The year when this occurred is not known, but it is suggested that it was in the period between 1584 and 1588. Trial documents are not extant, but as Carinci notes, there is an account by a contemporary jurist, Giacomo (Jacopo) Menochio (1532–1607). He wrote *consilia*, a kind of written testimony which was commissioned by juries in order to provide their own opinion about the process. Menochio was famous and very influential, president of ‘Magistrato delle entrate straordinarie’, and a member of the senate from Milan.⁶²⁵ The fact that he gave his opinion about Herculiana’s case, and moreover defended her, is highly important, and probably one of the reasons why she probably was not sentenced.⁶²⁶ In the eighth volume of the book *Consiliourum sive Responsorum*,⁶²⁷ Menochio writes about the

⁶²³ Quondam, 57.

⁶²⁴ Quondam, 57: “l’esemplarità in primo luogo di un circuito di relazioni e di rapporti personali, e quindi l’esemplarità di un’esperienza intellettuale”.

⁶²⁵ See Frajese, 86.

⁶²⁶ Carinci also suggests the possibility that it was connected with Herculiana’s brother, Giorgio Greghetto, who was a jurist in Padua, and certain archival documents prove that they were together at some meetings. See Carinci, 222.

⁶²⁷ Menochio, 1604-1616.

process, as *consilia* were meant to be a written opinion on processes which later would be used by the tribunal. Menochio addresses the Inquisitional tribunal “in order to defend ‘Donna Camilla’, the author of *Lettere di philosophia naturale*”, and in the book of *Consilia* provides the testimony of two interrogations.

The censorship of books, as already seen, was a very rigid and powerful institution, which lasted from the appearance of print in until the end of the nineteenth century.⁶²⁸ In 1515 the institute of the *imprimatur* was approved, the obligation that all manuscripts needed to be approved before being printed by ‘Magister Sacri Palatii’ in Rome. If a book appeared without an *imprimatur* the author needed to pay 500 ducats as penalty, would be suspended for one year from the activity of writing, and the printers would be excommunicated.⁶²⁹ However, it was possible, as it was in Herculiana’s case, for a book initially approved by the Inquisitional authorities to be suspended.⁶³⁰ The institution of the Sant’Ufficio together with the edict on prohibited books represented a very strict system of print and reading control. Not only Protestant books, but also all books where the themes of superstition, magic, astrology, divination, everything in philosophy considered as false, and the Bible and Talmud in the vernacular, were forbidden.⁶³¹ In 1564 in Rome the ‘*Index librorum prohibitorum*’ was published, the result of the highest Church authorities: the pope, two councils, and Sant’Uffizio.

Censorship became part of the reformations proposed by the Council of Trent, and was connected both with people (authors, readers, and publishers) and with books. It was connected with morality and the law. Church censorship included ‘censorship’ and ‘expurgation’. Censorship in canonical law was considered “spiritual medicine”, and the most popular punishment was excommunication. The *expurgatio* meant the

⁶²⁸ See Frajese.

⁶²⁹ Frajese, 14-15.

⁶³⁰ For example, this also happened to Tasso, as mentioned in Frajese, 61.

⁶³¹ Frajese, 26-27.

juridical decision connected with the soul of the person, which can be *omnino damnatae* (which means that they should go to hell) or *expurgable* (they should go to purgatory). Books were considered in the same way, depending on the doctrine they promoted.⁶³²

Once suspected for heretical ideas, usually the first part of the procedure was to conduct a search of the author/reader/publisher's home, codified in the praxis of '*Prattica per proceder nelle cause del Santo Ufficio*'. Afterwards, when the heretical ideas were proven, three things were taken into consideration: "the quality of the person, the quality of the books, and length of retention".⁶³³ If the person is considered more intelligent, that increased their culpability, and the danger of the book would increase with the education of author or the reader. In each case the suspect needed to accept their guilt, and then later to be questioned. The last part of the procedure was known under the name '*Quod interrogetur stricte*', which was a euphemism for torture. Usually, if the case was very complicated, and if the death sentence was considered, it would be sent to Rome. As there is no evidence that Herculiana's case reached Rome and the Sant'Uffizio Romano, it may be concluded that Camilla was soon freed.

Camilla Herculiana, in Menochio's narrative saved in *Consilia*,⁶³⁴ was accused of heresy, and he selected nine parts of her book on which the accusation was based. In her letter, she claimed that man would still die, with or without original sin. She referred to the authority of the book of Genesis to prove this statement. Although she referred to Genesis, this was not in line with Christian doctrine. This was the first accusation mentioned by Menochio.⁶³⁵ To defend her, Menochio used two arguments, theological and philosophical. If understood in the theological way, her ideas would be considered

⁶³² As explained in Frajese, 46-47.

⁶³³ Mentioned in Frajese, 52: "Poi si considerano principalmente tre cose: la qualità delle persone, la qualità de' libri e diuturnità della retentione".

⁶³⁴ Menochio, 180-184.

⁶³⁵ Menochio, 180: "L'huomo non potea vivere in eternum per che fu fatto di letto, di terra: e però se non peccava bisognava pur che morisse".

heretical, but in a philosophical way and due to the nature of men, they are completely acceptable. To reinforce his defence, he added that her opinion should not be taken into consideration as it was written by a woman, and women and ignorant people are easier to be excused.⁶³⁶

The second affirmation regards her ideas expressed in the first letter, on the Flood as the consequence of constantly growing numbers and bodies of people.⁶³⁷ To defend her, he relies on ideas expressed in her last letter, where she explicitly said that sacral doctors and theologians have different ideas from those of natural philosophers and astrologists. Then he mentions the third reason for her being accused of heresy, which is her sentence which refers to the Platonic theory of recollection.⁶³⁸ The fourth one is that from nothing anything could be produced, followed by her statement that souls are equal in sciences, and that the soul of the child has the same perfection as that of an old person.⁶³⁹ He analyses especially the accusation regarding astrology and her ideas that: “astrologers know future things, in historical periods and in human nature”.⁶⁴⁰ Menochio’s main defence consists of the fact that she wrote in a philosophical way and not a theological one,⁶⁴¹ and that the book was written by a woman and as such was easier to be excused, which was reinforced by the fact that the book was approved by the previous inquisitor before being sent to print.⁶⁴² With the 1562 decree *I Riformatori dello studio di Padova*, it was prescribed that manuscripts

⁶³⁶ Menochio, 181: “Quae sententia multo magis locum habet in idiotis & mulieribus, qui facilius solent excusari”.

⁶³⁷ Menochio, 182: “Essendo cresciuti l’huomini molto in numero, et di smisurata grandezza di corpo et longhezza di vita”.

⁶³⁸ Menochio, 183: “L’anima scende in questi corpi scientissima di tutte le cose”.

⁶³⁹ Menochio, 183: “che l’anime separate dal corpo sono eguale, in scienza [...] che l’anima d’un fanciullo sii tanto perfetta come quella d’un vecchio”.

⁶⁴⁰ Menochio, 183: “che l’Astrologi sanno le cose future nei regni, nell’età e nella natura dell’homini”.

⁶⁴¹ Menochio, 181: “D. Camillam Theologice locutam non esse, sed Philosophice”.

⁶⁴² This was mentioned at the very end of Menochi’s text, and as pointed out by Carinci (2013, 238), it was probably the reason why she was not sentenced. See Menochio, 183: “Rever. D. Episcopo nunc Cluniensi, tunc Inquisitori”.

needed to pass three readings before being sent to be printed: by an Inquisitor in regards to faith and customs, then by the public lector regarding political issues, and finally by the ducal secretary, who needed to check if there existed any offence to sovereign friends or current diplomatic negotiation.⁶⁴³

What is highly valuable in Menochio's written testimony is the fact that some of Herculiana's answers are written in Italian in the form of direct speech. She defended herself, insisting on the fact that she wrote philosophically. We read that she accepted her guilt, as that was the only way to start the procedure. According to Menochio, Herculiana stated: "I answer to these words that man being made of four elements, he could not live eternally, speaking in the way of Natural philosophy", insisting that it was possible to discuss all those things in the philosophical way: "speaking philosophically, I tell you, that it is impossible to claim anything to be truthful [...] In Theology, relying always on Sacral the Sacred scriptures, I confess that the Biblical flood and the death happened because of sin".⁶⁴⁴ This strategy of defence, that the expressed ideas should be connected only with philosophy and not with real belief, is also found in the documentation saved from Giordano Bruno's trial,⁶⁴⁵ as well as in many others who were sentenced to death.

Women were mainly accused of witchcraft, magic, and superstition,⁶⁴⁶ but here the woman was accused for expressing heretical ideas, in a book. Paradoxically, the fact that she was a woman saved her life, as her ideas were not treated as being as important as those expressed by men. As a woman, she was weaker, and could not think properly.

⁶⁴³ Frajese, 91.

⁶⁴⁴ Menochio, 182: "Io rispondo a queste parole ch'essendo l'huomo fatto di quatro elementi non potea vivere in eterno, parlando per via di Philosophia naturale [...] Parlando Philosophicamente, io vi dico, che non si può mai affermare una cosa per vera [...] In Theologia, reportandomi sempre alle sacre scritture, io confesso, ch'il Diluvio & la morte sono venuti per il peccato [...] "Io he esposto parlando naturalmnte, ch'anco un diluvio possi esser universale, et naturale, et anco miraculoso".

⁶⁴⁵ See Vincenzo Spampinato, *Vita di Giordano Bruno*, Messina, G. Principato, 1921.

⁶⁴⁶ An interesting case is that of Chiara Signorini, analysed by Carlo Ginzburg in "Stregoneria e pietà popolare", *Miti, emblemi, spie. Morfologia e storia*, Torino, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 1986, 3-28.

A similar example is found in the defence by Giulia Gonzaga who invoked her traditionally ascribed feminine characteristics, saying that as a woman she was not so intelligent. Similarly, Vittoria Gonzaga and Isabella Frattina used their ‘ignorance’ as an argument in front of the Inquisition (1568).⁶⁴⁷ When accused of reading heretical writings, and being educated and curious, Frattina replied: “Because I am a woman who has to take care about her home, it is not convenient for me to do these studies, but rather to refer as I do, to my superiors”.⁶⁴⁸ Gostanza da Libbiano, an obstetrician, was accused of magic; she confessed that she had met a demon and had pleasure with him, better than it ever was with her husband. Later she was freed, as it was proved that the “poor old woman said everything because of fear of the torture”.⁶⁴⁹ The well-known case of Menocchio (Domenico Scaredella) who presented himself as astrologer and prophet, explored by Ginzburg,⁶⁵⁰ also defended his ideas as being only philosophical.

These paratextual elements provide us with testimony on Camilla’s important participation in the *querelle des femmes*. Her education is connected with the possibility that she was the eldest of the children in her family, and it was common for the eldest to receive education in order to help their fathers in household management. Later, two marriages to apothecaries, and her work in the apothecary’s shop, led Herculiana to combine her profound interest in philosophy with practical knowledge, which was something that she insisted upon in her writings. Apart from that, the possibility of writing and being published, and consequently probably to be defended in front of the Inquisition by the most influential defender, Menocchio, provides us with testimony that

⁶⁴⁷ These three examples are mentioned in Rambaldi, 324-325.

⁶⁴⁸ Rambaldi, 325. In the original: “perché son donna che ha da tender alla cura di casa mia, ne mi si conviene far questi studi, ma riportarmi come faccio alli miei superiori”.

⁶⁴⁹ *La memoria di lei: storia delle donne, storia di genere*, Gabriella Zarri, ed., Torino, Società editrice internazionale, 1996, 61-165.

⁶⁵⁰ See Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi*, Torino, Einaudi, 2006.

she was wealthy, a condition which was necessary, especially for women, to write and publish books.

The choice of the epistolary genre with its dialogic character provides us with one more context within which Herculiana's writing (as well as the recently discovered letters by Erizzo) can be analysed. The book of her letters was published and it was considered worthy and important to "enter into the collective network made active by the printed book",⁶⁵¹ but consequently was completely forgotten until its first mention by Zancan in 1983. These letters, together with the two recently discovered in manuscript, became a part of cultural history and through Camilla Herculiana's participation in manuscript and print culture we can gain an important insight into the webs of relations in operation at the time.

The self-narrative present in the paratext and the text by Camilla Herculiana is connected with some historical developments in the second half of the sixteenth century. As already pointed out, she thought about her self-representation and provided a picture about Camilla Herculiana e Gregghetta, the *speciala* who lived in Padua and who lived off her work – although, as shown by Carinici, she worked in her first husband's pharmacy, and consequently continued to work with her second husband. Three identities can be read as important to her: woman, philosopher, and her profession – the basis of her practical knowledge. In Ray's words: "Erculiani consistently voices the empirical viewpoint, maintaining the central role of direct experience in the formulation of her arguments".⁶⁵² But her self-representation is shaped by the conventions regarding epistolary conversation, the early modern book, and a set of paratextual rules; it is therefore socially determined.

⁶⁵¹ Zarri, "Introduction", Zarri, ed., 1999, xi "Oltre alle scritture epistolari che ottengono l'onore della pubblicazione, che vengono considerate degne di entrare nel circuito collettivo attivato dal libro a stampa".

⁶⁵² Ray, 123.

Herculiana highlights her female identity and gender consciousness frequently within the text. Apart from gender, genre also matters. She defended herself, and at the same time was defended, by the fact that she was a woman. As a woman she needed to explain herself, “in order to create an audience receptive to their (that is, *women*’s) work. That apology was already written into – and thus expected of – the genre of the preface proved especially useful”.⁶⁵³

Knowing that her book might be considered suspicious by the Inquisition, Camilla Herculiana applied different strategies to protect herself and her book. Firstly, she sought and received the necessary permission from the Church authorities. Secondly, she introduced a network of powerful people, from the dedicatee to the addressees of her letters. Thirdly, she used the rhetoric of the dialogue, as one of the methods of the “rhetoric of dissimulation”, as in that way different ideas can be distributed between different persons/interlocutors. Two recently rediscovered letters dedicated to Camilla Herculiana prove that she also expressed her ideas in the manuscript, which was also one of the strategies to escape censure.

Gilles Ménage, the French erudite, in his *Historia mulierum philosopharum*, 1695, listed several Italian women who lived and wrote philosophy in the early modern period, such as Vittoria Colonna, Laura Battiferri Ammannati, Isabella Andreini, Arcangela Tarabotti, Elena Cornaro Piscopia, and Maria Selvaggia Borghini,⁶⁵⁴ but he did not mention Camilla Herculiana. The name and the philosophical ideas expressed by Camilla Herculiana should find their way into canonical studies, and Herculiana should be considered a philosopher in her own right, in the specific historical moment of the Reformation and the appearance of print.

⁶⁵³ Eckerle, Dowd and Eckerle, eds, 102.

⁶⁵⁴ Maria Pia Paola, “Come se mi fosse sorella Maria Selvaggia Borghini nella Repubblica delle lettere”, Zarri, ed., 1999, pp. 491-535.

CHAPTER 4: SPERANZA VITTORIA DI BONA

In this chapter I will present the life and work of woman writer Speranza Vittoria di Bona,⁶⁵⁵ who originated from the eastern shore of the Adriatic, and lived in the Italian peninsula in the Kingdom of Naples, in Manfredonia (Siponto), around 1569. She, together with her sister Giulia di Bona, is considered the first poetess from Croatia, but also the first woman writer in Italian from the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. Until recently, the work of Speranza di Bona was unknown, although a few traces of her existence are found in poetry by Ragusan poet Miho Monaldi. Monaldi dedicated one poem to the other Di Bona sister, Giulia, and her answering poem is saved in the same poetic collection. One more poem was dedicated to Giulia, by another Ragusan poet, Savino de Bobalo.⁶⁵⁶ These were the only traces which made possible certain hypotheses on the Di Bona sisters' literary work in the Ragusan literary and cultural context. By later critique, it was accepted that they belonged to the Ragusan literary academy Dei Concoridi, or that they made a female Petrarchist circle on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Its members, which according to many critics included Maria Gondola, Speranza and Giulia di Bona, and Fiore Zuzzori, became 'obverses' to the Italian women writers from the western shore, who in fact were members of some academies, as shown in chapter one.

⁶⁵⁵ The Croatian version of her name is Nada Bunić; on the usage of Italian and Croatian versions of proper names see Chapters 1 and 2.

⁶⁵⁶ See my section on reception.

In 2004, following his research in musical studies, the Croatian musicologist Ennio Stipcevi⁶⁵⁷ re-discovered the song book, “*canzoniere*”,⁶⁵⁸ comprised of occasional poetry, written by “Speranza et Vittoria di Bona”. The book is saved at the library of the Accademia degli Intronati,⁶⁵⁹ today the Biblioteca Comunale in Siena, Italy. The book is entitled *Difesa de le rime et prose de la signora Speranza, et Vittoria di Bona in difesa di suo honore, et contra quelli, che ricerco farli infamia con sue rime*.⁶⁶⁰ The place and the date of publication are unknown. On the cover we read that the book was published “ad instantia de la Signora speranza Vittoria di Bona”. The date of the dedicatory epistle is 1569, and it is signed by Di Bona, from the “ungrateful homeland”, meanwhile the places mentioned in the book are Manfredonia and Ragusa, as well as Barletta and Apricena. Apart from Ragusa on the eastern shore of the Adriatic, the other places are in the Kingdom of Naples, in southern Italy. As of 2016, only one copy of the book is extant.

The paratextual elements of this book are: the dedicatory epistle signed by Speranza Vittoria di Bona and dedicated to Ragusan nobleman Michele Luccari; five dedicatory sonnets (two dedicated to Michele Luccari, one to his sister Madalena Luccari, and another two to the most illustrious city of Ragusa); and non-signed,

⁶⁵⁷ Croatian musicologist and researcher. He mentions that it is possible to find some connection with musical activity in regards to Speranza di Bona’s verses. The fact is that Speranza di Bona mentions music in her dedicatory epistle (but it is not clear enough and requires further research). She states: “e questo istesso nelle musiche conteneva”. See Di Bona, 8. But until today no data about her musical activity (or the one connected with her verses) was found. See: Stipčević, 2004.

⁶⁵⁸ Gabrielli suggests considering this songbook in the term by Victoria Kirkham, “the choral anthology”. She uses this term to define the practice whereby Renaissance writers exchanged their poems with other poets, and published them in one book. See Gabrielli, 2015 and Cox, 2008, 108-109, or Cox, 2013, 25: “choral anthology, representing a poet not as lyric solipsist but as a social being, graciously interacting with a circle of more or less ‘trophy’ friends”.

⁶⁵⁹ L’Accademia degli intronati was founded by aristocratic members of society (only men) between 1525 and 1527 in Siena. It was “the first formal literary academy” (Cox, 2015, 10). Their first public activity appeared in 1531, when the anonymous comedy *L’ingannati* was presented. Its members gathered in the building which is today’s library, in the palace Sapienza; today the Biblioteca dell’Accademia degli Intronati.

⁶⁶⁰ Translation of this title: *Defence of rimes and prose written by the lady Speranza, et Vittoria di Bona. In defence of her honour, and against the one, who tried to make her infamy in his rimes; on request of Lady speranza Vittoria di Bona.*

handwritten ‘*errata corrige*’ of the above, which I believe should be attributed to Speranza di Bona. These elements are the focus of this chapter. Moreover, three letters published within this book between Gioanbattista Pagano and Speranza di Bona⁶⁶¹ should in my opinion be understood as private and confidential epitext in correspondence,⁶⁶² added to the book later, and as such an important part of the paratextual analysis of the secular discursive prose. Juxtaposing the reception literature and the work by Speranza di Bona in its particular historical moment and its particular society, I will present her life and work. In doing this paratextual analysis, I focus on the influential texts, and the rhetoric of defence, arguing that the historical subject Speranza di Bona wanted to defend her right to authorship, along with the honour of herself and her family. In doing this, ideas of *self-fashioning* proved to be useful in order to understand how she and her sister became visible within the discourse of the genre of the dedicatory epistle. Secondly, the material presence of the book in Siena will be analysed in the context of possible cultural encounters between Manfredonia, Siena, and Ragusa. The importance of Speranza di Bona’s secular lyric within the Italian post-Tridentine context and Italian women’s literature in general is emphasized. Finally, this chapter argues for the importance of analysing Speranza di Bona’s work in the context of the *querelle des femmes*. Her example is not so obvious as the previous two, but under the rhetoric of dissimulation it is, in my opinion, an important example of women’s defence, and has been neglected by scholarship.

I decided to translate into English only parts of the text, as its language is rather hermetic and it would require more time.⁶⁶³ I base this chapter partially on the analysis

⁶⁶¹ Di Bona, 62v-64r.

⁶⁶² According to Genette, 344: “The location of the epitext is therefore anywhere outside the book – but of course nothing precludes its later admission to the peritext”.

⁶⁶³ Also, it will be partially translated in the forthcoming edition *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*. See note 1 of this thesis.

done by Gabrielli (2015), mainly the close analysis and her translation into Croatian of the dedicatory epistle. In doing close analysis, and following the biographical and literary conclusions suggested by Gabrielli as a “potentially productive contextual hypothesis”,⁶⁶⁴ this chapter offers an analysis of the rhetoric of defence, and provides a detailed analysis of the reception of both Giulia and Speranza di Bona. Speranza di Bona uses the typical rhetorical forms for the dedicatory genre in order to defend her right to be published. Apart from that, she narrates a story which should be partially understood as self-narrative, where the author-narrator becomes at the same time the hero of the narrative. In order to become the hero, she needed to oppose herself and her family to the other, in this case the wicked people from her homeland. Moreover, this chapter will highlight the legal function of the dedicatory epistle, focusing on the topoi of defence, question the notion of the relational self within honour culture, and suggest also that the author, Speranza di Bona, could be represented not only as a writer, but also as an early modern Italian *virtuosa* (“secular women as artists, as musical performers, as composers, as actresses”⁶⁶⁵).

The epistolary context proved to be very important for the analysis of this book, as it opened important path towards the legal function of paratext. The epistolary genre, I believe, connects all parts of this book, from the dedicatory epistle and dedicatory poems, through the occasional answer poetry, and three letters, to the final errata. By adding the part on the reception (both contemporary and later) of her and her sister Giulia’s life and work, I argue the importance of a critical assessment of the bibliographical works from the eighteenth century onwards and their tendency to fit the

⁶⁶⁴ Gabrielli, 2015, pp. 83-182, here 89: “navedeni podaci predstavljaju, ako nista drugo, potencijalno produktivnu kontekstualizacijsku hipotezu”.

⁶⁶⁵ As defined in Cox, 2016, 167.

author's work into already prescribed roles and positions. Certain misconceptions in previous critique, corrected by Maria Francesca Gabrielli, will be highlighted.

The re-discovered book written by Speranza di Bona is the only known copy of the book. The importance of this book is at least threefold. First, it represents material proof that another woman during the early modern period wrote verses in Italian, and therefore the Italian women's literary tradition becomes richer for one woman author. Moreover, as she had an obvious connection with the city-state of Ragusa, her re-discovery brought new insights into literary studies of female authorship and early modern literature and culture in general on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. The poems published in this anthology are written following patterns of Petrarchism, but with strong political ideas: in the entire anthology there is not a poem about love to be found.⁶⁶⁶ As such, an important analysis of two sonnets dedicated to the Virgin and signed by Speranza di Bona is done by Gabrielli in the article "*Vergine pura, Vergine bella*: notes on the representation of Mary in Speranza di Bona's verse collection",⁶⁶⁷ in which she focuses on the protofeminist aspects of her sonnets. As many poems are written in the form of the poetics of response or answer poetry (which in the early modern period was quite a popular genre), these paired poems provide material for the analysis of networks and patronage relations (family, female, and friends) within the richness of the social and cultural context. And finally, the long dedicatory epistle, written in the first person and signed by "Speranza et Vittoria di Bona", offers important data both for the reconstruction of the life and work of the authors of the book, as well as providing some important insights on their relations, as suggested by micro-history and new historicism.

⁶⁶⁶ See Iva Grgić and Tonko Maroević: "Petrarchismo in assenza d'amore: il canzoniere di Nada Bunic", *Petrarka I Petrarkizam u hrvatskoj književnosti*, ed. B. Lucin and M. Tomazović, Split, Književni Krug, 2006, pp. 75-82.

⁶⁶⁷ See Gabrielli, 2014.

Speranza di Bona's book, and especially its paratextual elements, gives us at first glance a fertile terrain for the reconstruction of its author's life. As Natalie Zemon Davis points out: "Virtually all the occasions for talking or writing about the self involved a relationship: with God or God and one's confessor, with a patron, with a friend or a lover, or especially with one's family and lineage".⁶⁶⁸ Some insights into her private life can be found, but what should be emphasized here is that the writer narrated her own truth, her own perception of certain events which originated from a certain social context. In the dedicatory epistle there are references to names, places, events and dates, which were mainly reconstructed by Gabrielli, which together with the occasional answer-poetry provides us with insights into the richness of the social context and relationship between these poems and certain ideologies, and most importantly it appears as the means of establishing Speranza di Bona as a poetess, an educated woman who answers in the same way to the people of letters.

4.1 Speranza and Giulia di Bona: "women of great spirit and poets in Italian"⁶⁶⁹

Even today, the existence of any archival data on life of Speranza di Bona and her family is not proven. Her name was mentioned for the first time in the answer poem written by the Ragusan poet Michele Monaldi, published posthumously in his book *Rime del Sign. Michele Monaldi* (1599). Monaldi was one of the interlocutors in Di Gozze's discourses and was also praised in Gondola's dedicatory epistle. In his poem dedicated to Giulia di Bona, Speranza's name is mentioned together with the name of her sister. The importance of this poetical dialogue between Giulia di Bona and Michele Monaldi, apart from the fact that until 2004 Giulia's octave was considered to be the

⁶⁶⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France", *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, eds Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and Davide E. Wellbery, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1986, 64-76.

⁶⁶⁹ Appendini, 1803, 232.

first poem written in Italian by a woman writer from Ragusa, lies in the fact that it was from here that the literary critics⁶⁷⁰ learned about the existence of another female poet, Giulia's sister Speranza di Bona. In his answer to Giulia's verses, Monaldi declared that "the two sisters Speranza and Giulia write pure and honourable letters" and compared them with the muses of music Euterpe and Clio.⁶⁷¹ Although Monaldi never wrote that they were from Ragusa, later critique considered them Ragusan writers. Until 2004, this was the only proof of their existence.

Emphasized three times in her dedicatory text, we read that in the family Di Bona, the only male figure was the father. Therefore, Speranza, her mother, and her sisters lived in Manfredonia, in her own words, "without having here brothers or any cousins to protect us".⁶⁷² Also, in the body of the book we read that Speranza di Bona had five sisters.⁶⁷³ Moreover, two poems on the occasion of her sisters' deaths (Lucrezia and Cassandra⁶⁷⁴), and three in praise of virtues, dedicated to the other sisters (Angela Maria,⁶⁷⁵ Isabella,⁶⁷⁶ Giulia⁶⁷⁷) are saved in this book. There are also sonnets dedicated to the other sisters written by Giulia di Bona, to Cassandra,⁶⁷⁸ to Speranza,⁶⁷⁹ Angela

⁶⁷⁰ See: Stipčević, 2004, Grgić-Maroević, 2006, Grgić-Maroević, 2009, etc.

⁶⁷¹ This fact should be connected with their musical activity. See below.

⁶⁷² Di Bona, 3: "Non avendo noi fratelli ne qui parente alcuno".

⁶⁷³ According to Gabrielli, 2015, 83-84: "Sisterhood is, I would say, *fil rouge* which marks the book from the beginning till end, from the dedicatory epistle which is in its nature polemical [...] until her last verses, or better to say closing poetical exchange *per le rime* between Speranza and Giulia di Bona [...] there is an echo of word-rime '*sorella*' ('sister')". In the original: "Sestrinstvo je, rekla bih, *fil rouge* sto obilježava knjigu od korice do korice, od polemički intonirane posvetne poslanice [...] do zadnjih njezinih stihova, tj. do pjesničke razmjene *per le rime* između Speranze i Giulie di Bona kojom se zaključuje kanconijer [...] odjekuje riječ rima '*sorella*' ('sestra')".

⁶⁷⁴ Di Bona, 23v-25v: "Nella morte de la sorella mia Lucretia di Bona".

⁶⁷⁵ Di Bona, 47r-47v: "Alla sorella mia Angela Maria di Bona".

⁶⁷⁶ Di Bona, 47v-48r: "Alla sorella mia Isabella di Bona".

⁶⁷⁷ Di Bona, 48r-48v: "Alla sorella mia Giulia di Bona".

⁶⁷⁸ Di Bona, 65v-66r: the sonnet written by Giulia di Bona: "Sonetti di Giulia di Bona nella morte di la sorella mia Cassandra di Bona".

⁶⁷⁹ Di Bona, 66v-67v, 69r, 71r: "Alla sorella mia Speranza Vittoria di Bona".

Maria,⁶⁸⁰ Isabella⁶⁸¹ and present in the last part of the book, which according to Gabrielli might be analysed as micro-canzoniere.

That family di Bona originated from Ragusa or possibly from another town on the eastern shore of the Adriatic⁶⁸² is clear; the surname Di Bona has the Slav version Bunic, and Di Bona was one of the most influential families in Ragusa. But how and when the Di Bona sisters moved, together with their family, to Puglia, Manfredonia, it is not clear. However, it is known that Manfredonia was a common place for Ragusan merchants. According to Gabrielli, Speranza di Bona was born in Siponto (today Manfredonia), and not in Ragusa as stated by previous scholarship.⁶⁸³ Until Gabrielli's recent research (2015) the scholarship took for granted that Di Bona's critique of "the ungrateful homeland" in her dedicatory epistle referred to the city-state Ragusa, following the classification made by the Accademia degli Intronati, where this unique copy is saved. On the contrary, Gabrielli claims that her homeland is Manfredonia, using Di Bona's verses in order to prove her hypothesis: "being born in Siponto",⁶⁸⁴ and also refers to the passage in the dedicatory epistle, where Speranza di Bona refers to Ragusa as her second homeland, juxtaposing it with her first homeland, Manfredonia. The fact that critics overlooked such an obvious datum, in Gabrielli's opinion, could be explained by taking into consideration two things: firstly, the hermetic nature of the language of the dedicatory epistle and the printing errors, and secondly the fact that the narrator Speranza di Bona, both in the dedicatory epistle and in the poems, discusses her "cruel homeland". At the very beginning of her study, Gabrielli states:

⁶⁸⁰ Di Bona, 67v-68r: "Alla sorella mia Angela Maria di Bona".

⁶⁸¹ Di Bona, 68r-68v: "Alla sorella mia Isabella di Bona".

⁶⁸² For instance, there was Ivan Bona (variations of his surname: Bolica, de Boliris) born in Kotor but who lived in Manfredonia. His main work is *Descriptio sinus et Urbis Ascriviensis*, unknown date, sixteenth century. See Viktoria Franić-Tomić, Slobodan Prosperov Novak, *Književnost ranog novovjekovlja u Boki kotorskoj*, Zagreb, Hrvatska Sveučilišna Naklada, 2015.

⁶⁸³ As will be explained further below.

⁶⁸⁴ Di Bona, 57v: "poich'io nacqui in Siponto".

The severe critique, which we read both in the dedicatory epistle and the corpus of the book, is addressed to the Italian environment of the city located in Puglia – Manfredonia, and not Ragusa and Ragusan society, which on the contrary had a very honourable place in the book.⁶⁸⁵

The immediate acceptance by scholarship that Speranza di Bona criticized Ragusan society and not Italian should be understood, I believe, as the logical continuation of the representation of women's literature at the time in Ragusa. As Gondola is represented as somebody who criticized Ragusan society and because of that her text was censored, it was logical to put one more woman in the same context. However, in similar conclusions two more things should be taken into consideration: the choice of the dedicatee, and the usage of narrative material as a historical source. The "private dedicatee" of the dedicatory epistle is Ragusan nobleman Michele Luccari. Regardless the public nature of the same dedicatory epistle, we can suppose that Di Bona had a private relationship with the dedicatee and we should pose the question, if she was defending the pride of her family and herself in Manfredonia, of why she decided to dedicate this work to a person from Ragusa. However, as the real dedicatee is the reader, as "dedicating a work is a public act that the reader is, as it were, called on to witness"⁶⁸⁶ and the reader thus becomes the "internal addressee",⁶⁸⁷ this dedication can be considered as an implicit dedicatory epistle, directed to the anonymous reader, and only symbolically dedicated to Luccari. The name of the dedicatee is only mentioned

⁶⁸⁵ Gabrielli, 2015, 85: "Oštrim kritikama, što u predgovornom tekstu što u korpusu zbirke, podvrgava se talijanska sredina apuljskoga grada Manfredonije, a nikako Dubrovnik i dubrovačko društvo, koji, naprotiv, u knjizi, zauzimaju počasno mjesto".

⁶⁸⁶ According to Genette, 135: "The dedication always is a matter of demonstration, ostentation, and exhibition: it proclaims a relationship, whether intellectual or personal, actual or symbolic, and this proclamation is always at the service of the work, as a reason for elevating the work's standing or as a theme for commentary".

⁶⁸⁷ I borrow the terminology from *I margini del libro. Indagine teorica e storica sui testi di dedica*, A cura di Maria Antonietta Terzoli, Roma e Padova 2004, 16. Furio Brugnolo and Roberto Benedetti in the introduction pointed out that the internal addressee should never be confused with the dedicatee.

once in the title of the dedicatory epistle, and not at all within the text. At the beginning, Di Bona metonymically calls him “virtuous mister”,⁶⁸⁸ and later in the text she says: “meanwhile your Lordship was busy in your own honourable matters”.⁶⁸⁹ As the dedicatee “is always in some way responsible for the work that is dedicated to him and to which he brings, willy-nilly, a little of his support and therefore participation”,⁶⁹⁰ we should ask what the responsibility of Michele Luccari consisted of, and why the critique of Manfredonian society is addressed to a man who lived in Ragusa.

The second obstacle is the historicity of the narrative material. If we interpret this dedicatory epistle as partly self-writing, intended as a text in which the author appears in action or in suffering, it can give us knowledge about relevant cultural and historical processes.

Regarding biographical data on Speranza di Bona, Gabrielli also proposes that her year of birth was 1536, taking into consideration years mentioned by the same Speranza in her poetry. Namely, as there is a poem written on the occasion of the death of Speranza’s four-years older sister Lucrezia, who died aged 15, in 1547, then Speranza might have been born in 1536. If she was born in 1536, at the time when the dedicatory epistle was written she was 33 years old, and it is possible to conclude from the dedicatory text that she was an unmarried woman, as well as her sisters. Two of the five sisters, Speranza and her sister Giulia, were poets, and therefore we already have two transgressions of women’s prescribed norms: unmarried poetesses.

⁶⁸⁸ Di Bona, 2r: “Al molto magnifico, et virtuoso signore, il signor Michele Luccari Nobile Raguseo”.

⁶⁸⁹ Di Bona, 11v: “Mentre V.S. e stata nei suoi honorati negozii occupato”.

⁶⁹⁰ Genette, 136.

4.1.1 The emblem of the name

The emblematic meaning of the name – Speranza et Vittoria di Bona – should be pointed out, as her name provoked different interpretations, and not rarely confusion. On the frontispiece of her book, the conjunction *et* (“and”) appears between her two names, and probably that was the reason why Graciotti concluded that the name covered two persons. The conjunction ‘*et*’ does not appear either in the text of the dedicatory epistle, or in the dedicatory poem to Michele Luccari, where the name mentioned is Speranza Vittoria di Bona, and Vittoria should be understood as Speranza’s second name.

However, if we understand her dedicatory epistle as partially a self-narrative, the importance of the authorial name as part of the self-fashioning process is obvious. Namely, in trying to explain that somebody else published verses under the name Speranza (which also can be understood in the line of the topos of modesty, as this topos is quite frequent in early modern literature), she said that she was almost sure that in the Kingdom (thinking of the Kingdom of Naples) there was no another woman with the same name as her, who enjoyed writing verses.⁶⁹¹ She therefore provides the reader with information regarding her ‘uniqueness’ connected with her name, as well as regarding the thing she does: writing. The Slav version of her name, according to Vekarić, and reported by Gabrielli, did not exist in Ragusa at the time: “the Croatian name Nada [...] is not found in archival documents before the end of the nineteenth century”.⁶⁹²

⁶⁹¹ Di Bona, 7v: “nominandosi Speranza v’ho preso sospetto percioche Donna di tal nome che si diletta non ho inteso che in regno ci sia”.

⁶⁹² This is mentioned in Gabrielli, 2015, 83. It is very important data, as all sources which mention the name Nada and consider her only as a woman writer from Ragusa. Regarding names in early modern Ragusa, see: Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika, 4. Odabrane biografije (A-D)*, Zagreb-Dubrovnik, Zavod za Povijesne Znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2013, 144.

There are three words with powerful meaning in the name Speranza di Bona: (ital. “*la speranza*” – hope; “*la vittoria*” – victory; “*bona*” – would be equivalent with *buona*, which means good). From the other side, the usage and explanation of Speranza’s name by Gioantomaso lupo da Bagnuolo in his letter dedicated to her⁶⁹³ is worth further analysis. He said that she (Speranza) should always stay as green as “her so bright and honourable name”.⁶⁹⁴ Shortly thereafter, this comparison becomes clearer, as he compares it with a flower garland. He says that she “will eternally live and I swear it is because of that eternal green plant to which your so celebrated name appears similar”.⁶⁹⁵ In fact, the historic dictionary of the Italian language / TLIO proves that the flower ‘garland’ had, apart from the symbolic meaning of ‘eternal glory and honour’, also the meaning of ‘hope and victory’ (Speranza and Vittoria). In the sonnet *proposta* by the same Gioantommaso Lupo da Bagnuolo, we can read the encomium of her name, mentioning that her name is the colour of that tree which does not lose leaves.⁶⁹⁶

Speranza also insists on the power of the onomastic, being influenced by Ariosto and Tasso. In her sonnet dedicated to Gioanbattista Pagano she writes: “where from good the hope is erected”.⁶⁹⁷ However, the direct influence for connecting her name with this flower should be searched for in Ariosto’s work, as Ariosto’s stanzas are present in the whole book.⁶⁹⁸ The metonymical end of the dedicatory epistle is highly emblematic “that makes me secure in hope to gain victory”⁶⁹⁹ and the first dedicatory

⁶⁹³ Di Bona, 63r-64r.

⁶⁹⁴ Di Bona, 63r-63v: “al suono del suo sì chiaro è tanto honorato nome che rende quel soavissimo odore a cui nullo altro pareggia hora per demonstrarle ch’una tal donna devrebbe star pur verde come da per se tal nome divino manifesta”.

⁶⁹⁵ Di Bona, 63v: “la ghirlanda di che miser Phebo ci orna le sacrate tempie ò la bellezza di che venire v’è cortesissima dimostrata o’l dono di che tanto de la boscherenia Dialna fregiata seti perche per quella ci immortate la seconda vi vi fa divina, e per terzo vivrete eterna è vi giuro per quella verde pianta a cui tanto il vostro celebrato nome similie si dimostra che se de i beni de l’iniqua fortuna abondasse abbastanza come eglino fussero i miei versi a voi tutti”.

⁶⁹⁶ Di Bona, 33v: “Et come il tuo chiar Nome è del colore / de l’alber che tra Noi foglia non perde”.

⁶⁹⁷ Di Bona, 56r-56v: “Onde de buoni s’erga la speranza” and “Et Vittoria haggia a piene mia Speranza”.

⁶⁹⁸ On Ariosto’s influence see Gabrielli, 2015, pp.111-118.

⁶⁹⁹ She finishes the dedicatory epistle stating: “with hope to obtain victory”; “che mi rendeno certa la speme d’haverne vittoria”, Di Bona, 22r.

sonnet finishes with the verse: “the desire of my hope to gain victory”.⁷⁰⁰ The same onomastic importance can be seen in some of the poems “with the hope has the dull victory”.⁷⁰¹ In the *risposta* by Cornelia Caraffa, there is a reference to her name.⁷⁰²

4.2 *Difesa de le rime et prose*

Difesa de le rime et prose consists of 71 folios plus two pages of errata. The poetical corpus of the book consists of: “116 sonnets; 5 madrigals; 4 poetical cycles in octaves; one exchange poem in octaves; two caudate sonnets; and one isolated stanza of canzone”.⁷⁰³ The secular discursive prose contains the dedicatory epistle, three letters, and the errata. Within this book, Speranza di Bona wrote twenty-five sonnets, three madrigals, and one caudate sonnet. The recent assumption made by Gabrielli should be highlighted, that this book contains also “micro-canzoniere written by Giulia di Bona”.⁷⁰⁴ To prove that in this book there are in fact two, Gabrielli refers to the passages in the dedicatory epistle, where such an assumption is obvious: “My sisters did not write anywhere else, only in that collection, where are the sonnets written by the little one, who does it for pleasure, which here will be possible to see”.⁷⁰⁵

This unique book is saved in the Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, and it is the only known extant copy, at least as yet. There are at least three hypothetical answers to the questions posed by modern critique as to how and why the book ended up at Siena’s Biblioteca Comunale at the Accademia degli Intronati, as its author was situated in Manfredonia and originated from the eastern shore of the Adriatic. According to

⁷⁰⁰ Di Bona, 22v: “il desio di mia speme habbia vittoria”.

⁷⁰¹ Di Bona, 27r: “e con la speme hà la Vittoria spenta”.

⁷⁰² Di Bona, 40v: “Voi di bona speranza et ferma adorno”.

⁷⁰³ Gabrielli, 2015, 94: “Pjesnički dio zbirke posvećen Speranzinoj zbornoj antologiji sadrži stošesnaest soneta, pet madrigala, četiri pjesnička ciklusa u oktavama i jednu razmjenu u oktavama, dva soneta s repom te jednu izoliranu stancu kancone”.

⁷⁰⁴ See Gabrielli, 2015, pp. 83-182, especially pp.118-121.

⁷⁰⁵ Di Bona, 19r: “le sorelle mie non l’hanno esercitato in modo alcuno eccetto in quel raccolto ci sono i sonetti di propria mano della piccola che se diletta un poco che si vedranno qui”.

Stipčević,⁷⁰⁶ the book was a part of Alberto Fortis' donation to the Sienese Accademia degli Intronati.⁷⁰⁷ Tonko Maroević and Iva Grgić-Maroević⁷⁰⁸ connect the presence of book in Siena with the name of the Sienese poetess Virginia de Salvi,⁷⁰⁹ with whom Speranza di Bona was exchanging verses. From the other side, Gabrielli in her recent study gives an appealing hypothesis on the possible networks. According to her, the reasons for having book in Siena might be connected with the name of dedicatee – Michele Luccari. In fact, she concludes that Michele Luccari might have been the brother of Madalena Luccari, the wife of Ragusan poet Dinko Ranjina⁷¹⁰ (to whom Di Bona dedicated the sonnet at the beginning of the book – “To Maddalena Luccari”).⁷¹¹ Ragnina had correspondence with Laura Battiferri (1523–1589), the poetess who was a member of the Accademia degli Intronati⁷¹² from 1560. According to Gabrielli, Ranjina might be the one who suggested the poetical communication between Monaldi and the Di Bona sisters, and might be responsible for the book being in Siena, as he stayed in Siena.

⁷⁰⁶ Stipčević, 2004.

⁷⁰⁷ Alberto Fortis travelled in Dalmatia and published *Viaggio in Dalmazia, dell'abate Alberto Fortis*, Venice, Alvise Milocco, 1774. After his death, his books were donated to the Biblioteca Comunale in Siena. So, it is possible that Di Bona's work appeared among those books.

⁷⁰⁸ Grgić and Maroević, 2006.

⁷⁰⁹ Virginia Salvi (c.1510, Siena – 1571, Rome (?)) was also a well-known poetess during her life. She was born and lived in Siena. Recently, Konrad Eisenbichler managed to collect all her poetry and consequently it was published in Siena, in 2012, by the Accademia senese degli Intronati. Salvi was active as a poet from 1540, and her first poems were published in 1544 (Cox, 2013, 90). One of her poems was used by Pierluigi da Palestina (1510–1571) for his “Madrigali profani”. Her *Lettere e sonetti* was published in 1571, in Venice. See: Virginia Salvi and Beatrice Salvi, *Lettera, et sonetti della signora Virginia Salvi, et della s. Beatrice sua figliuola a m. Celio Magno con le risposte. Et un Sonetto dell'istesso in lode di Venetia*, Venetia, Brandino & Ottaviano Scoto, 1571. Together with two poetesses from Siena, Laudomia Forteguerri and Aurelia Petrucci, Salvi shared considerable good reputation. From 1546 she was connected with a satirical epigram written on the occasion of the death of “capitano del popolo”, Francesco Savini, and regarding the bad governance of the city of Siena, and consequently was expelled from the city. The place and the date of her death are unknown. On the life and work of Virginia de' Salvi see: Konrad Eisenbichler, *L'opera poetica di Virginia Martini de Salvi*, Siena, Accademia Senese degli Intronati, 2012; and *The Sword and the Pen: Women, Politics and Poetry in Sixteenth Century Siena*, Paris, University of Notre Dame, 2012 by the same author.

⁷¹⁰ Dinko Ranjina was a Ragusan poet. The Italian version of his name is Domenico Ragnina. He wrote *Rime del signor Domenico Ragnina, in Il secondo volume delle rime scelte da diversi eccellenti autori, novamente mandato in luce*, Venetia, Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1565.

⁷¹¹ According to previous critique she was the wife of Michele Luccari. See Grgić, 2006 and others.

⁷¹² As noted by Gabrielli, 91, Laura Battiferri (Battiferra), who exchanged letters with Monaldi, became member of the Sienese Accademia degli Intronati, in 1560.

Regarding the materiality of the book, there are a few more paratextual elements worth further analysis. On the cover there is a drawing of a left foot and part of a right one,⁷¹³ and apart from some illegible words, two names appear: Nicola Rubini, and Lucesini, and the handwritten sentence: “*tolle legem*”. I believe it could be important to read the cataloguing of the book in the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intornati, in Siena, as the manner of the library’s description influenced later critique. Apart from the author Di Bona, there are also two more names under the reference “the other authors”: Lupi, Giacinto and Rubini, Nicola.⁷¹⁴ The publisher is supposed to be Venice although there is no sign of this, on the request of Lady Speranza Vittoria di Bona. The year is 1569. The library’s description contains the quotation: “da l’ingrata patria (ex. Ragusa), 4th September 1569”. This fact is accepted by all critique, which was corrected by Gabrielli’s work in 2015. There are also some notes, numbers, and some illegible writing on the book: and the phrase “*tolle legem, sonno, tonno*”. The inscription ‘*tolle legem*’ was usually followed by ‘*et fiet certamen*’ or ‘*fiat disputatio*’, which means ‘take away the law and I shall reason with you’. These words by St. Ambrose to Valentinian, written on the cover of this book, made me think about the legal function of this book, and mainly of the dedicatory epistle. Moreover, the presence of the

⁷¹³ Identificativi: IMPRONTA iae- rai- lalo esgi (3) 1569 (Q), IT-SI0046 (My translation).

In the original: Titolo: Difesa de le rime et prose de la signora Speranza et Vittoria di Bona in difesa del suo honore & contra quelli che ricercò farli infamia con sue rime; Autore: Di Bona, Speranza Vittoria; Altri autori: Lupi, Giacinto; Rubini, Nicola; Di Bona, Speranza Vittoria; Editore: [Venezia?]; Ad Instantia de la Signora speranza Vittoria di Bona; Anno: 1569; Descrizione: A c. A2r dedicatoria dell’autrice a Michele Luccari, nobile raguseo, datata a c. C6r “Da l’ingrata Patria [i.e. Ragusa] adi 4 sette[m]bre 1569”; Note: Conti e scarabocchi sul front. A c. I7v e I8 note ms. coeve riguardanti l’autrice e un’errata. IT-SI0046; Sulla cop. Disegno di un piede e firme: Lucesini; Rubini Nicola. In testa al front. si intravede, tra prove di penna e conti vari, un’altra nota ms “Di Diacinto Lupi et de sua amici”. IT-SI0046. Segnatura: A-I8; Lingua: Italiano; Descr. fisica: 71, [1] c.; 8°; Identificativi: IMPRONTA iae- rai- lalo esgi (3) 1569 (Q), IT-SI0046; Fonte: UniSI (Catalogo metropolitano), available at: www.bibliotecasiena.it/cataloghi/opac-sbs. Accessed 3 December 2015.

⁷¹⁴ It is appealing to suggest, although at this stage of research it is not possible to prove, that the handwritten name on the cover of Nicolò Rubini’s book refers to the composer from Modena, known under name Il Cavaliere Rubino del Cornetto (1584–1625), which could provide us with some connections with music, although after the book’s publication.

addresses connected with the law provides a possible context to the real juridical process.

In addition, the fact that the book was printed “*ad instantia di Speranza di Bona*” (on her request and at her own expense or her father’s, as stated by Maroević, 2006) gives us space to consider that this book was printed in a very small edition, perhaps even of just one copy,⁷¹⁵ which does not diminish the importance of this book, as manuscripts had the same importance, or in some cases were more important than books. Speranza di Bona mentioned that her poetry was circulating in the circles of her fathers’ friends, and also that there was another longer explanation of the family di Bona situation, which in the form of a letter she sent to Michele Luccari, and which never reached him.

The importance of the manuscript would sometimes overcome the importance of the published book. As noted by Cox, the two greatest female Petrarchists, Veronica Gambara and Vittoria Colonna, preferred manuscript circulation (Colonna did not listen to Bembo’s advice to print her verses, and Gambara’s first work to be printed was in 1759.)⁷¹⁶ Similarly, Gaspara Stampa circulated her poetry in manuscript to the elite members of her society.⁷¹⁷ Moreover, according to Speranza di Bona’s words in the *errata corrige*, which might also be understood in line with the topos of modesty, the main aim of this book was “not to offer art to the world, but rather to explain the truth”, and thus we could consider that it was not planned to have many copies. It might be significant, for the paratextual analysis, that Di Bona’s title, “lady” (“*signora*”), appears only in the title of the book in the frontispiece, meanwhile at the beginning of the book the noun “lady” has been crossed out. The only handwriting in the book, apart from the

⁷¹⁵ Gabrielli, 100.

⁷¹⁶ Cox, 2013, 23.

⁷¹⁷ According to Cox, this could be connected with “Stampa’s nonnoble birth and her sexually irregular lifestyle”. See Cox, 2013, 26.

writing on the cover of the book already mentioned, is in the *errata corrige*, and this correction of the word “lady”.

Giulia di Bona was Speranza’s younger sister, according to her writing. Some of her verses in answer were saved in two books by Ragusan writers, Miho Monaldi and Savinio de Bobali Sordo.⁷¹⁸ Her answer verse to Bobali, entitled only “*risposta*”,⁷¹⁹ appeared in the book *Rime amorose pastorali e satire*⁷²⁰ in 1589. Ten years later, in Monaldi’s posthumously published book *Rime del Sign. Michele Monaldi*, which is dedicated to Zuzzori, there is one poem in answer to Monaldi’s verses, entitled “La signora Giulia Bona inferma a Monaldi”,⁷²¹ where at the end she states that being ill her death is close. It is in Monaldi’s book that the Di Bona sisters are mentioned for the first time. Monaldi dedicates the poem to Speranza and Giulia di Bona, naming them Euterpe and Clio, and writes that people should read “the pure and honourable writings by Speranza and Giulia”.⁷²² The fact that he compares them with two goddesses of music is significant; in the dedicatory text we read about Speranza’s inclination towards music, and together with Stipčević’s⁷²³ hypothesis on the musical activity of the Di Bona sisters, offers the possibility of considering these women authors being close to the concept of the early modern ‘virtuosa’.

⁷¹⁸ Monaldi, 1599, 22: “La signora Giulia Bona inferma a Monaldi”.

⁷¹⁹ Another Ragusan poet, Savinio de Bobali Sordo (Savo Bobaljevic), dedicated the poem “Alla signora Giulia Bona. Risposta” to Giulia di Bona, in his book, republished in Ragusa, *Rime del nobil uomo Savinio de Bobalo sordo e del signore Michele Monaldi dedicate all’eccelso senato della Repubblica di Ragusa*, Ragusa, Carlo Antonio Occhi, 1783.

⁷²⁰ Savino Bobali, *Rime amorose, pastorali e satire*, Venetia, Presso Aldo, 1589.

⁷²¹ Monaldi, 1599, 8: “Chi vuol veder quanto d’ingegno, e arte / in gradita opra a noi mostrarsi lice / che costui legga le pure / et honorate carte di Speranza e di Giulia”. Monaldi writes: “Per le Signore, Speranza e Giulia di Bona Euterpe e Clio [...] Legga le pure, et honorate carte di SPERANZA, e di GIULIA. o ben felici chi’l lor leggiadro stil inuola a morte”.

⁷²² Monaldi, 1599, 8.

⁷²³ Stipčević, 2004.

4.3 Reception of Speranza di Bona

The critical reception from the end of the eighteenth century onwards in the line of bibliographical approach (the approach which dominated throughout these centuries in the representation of early modern books), included only re-presentation of Giulia di Bona. The critic who mentions the two Di Bona sisters, calling them “women of great spirit and poetesses in Italian”, was Appendini (1803).⁷²⁴ It is significant that Appendini, relying on Cerva’s work, mentioned that according to Cerva the Di Bona sisters do not belong to the patrician family of the same name.⁷²⁵ Later, Dolci (1901) under the number 140 mentioned verses she wrote in answer to Monaldi.⁷²⁶

Later, Šafarik, mainly using Appendini as his source, dedicated a long chapter to “Julia Bunić oder Bona (1550–1585)”.⁷²⁷ Consequently, one century later, in the seminal work about women writers from old Ragusa, already mentioned, which covers the period from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century,⁷²⁸ written by Zdenka Markovi, both sisters Di Bona are mentioned, Giulia as the first poetess from Croatia, and Speranza as her sister, a poetess from Ragusa. From that moment until 2004 and Ennio Stipčević’s discovery, the life and work of Giulia’s sister Speranza di Bona was unknown both to the Croatian and Italian cultural environment. The most comprehensive work on the content of this book as well as on the representation of Speranza di Bona’s life is made by University of Zagreb professor Francesca Maria

⁷²⁴ Appendini, 1803, 232, writes that the Di Bona sisters were “of high talent and poets in Italian”. In the original: “Donne di grande spirito e poetesse in Italiano”.

⁷²⁵ Appendini, 1803, 232: “GIULIA, e SPERANZA BON/I, le quali il Cerva non ascrive alla Patrizia famiglia di tal nome, furono contemporanee della Resti, e anch’ esse donne di grande spirito, e poetesse Italiane amiche di Savino Bobali, e di Michele Monaldi, fra le di cui poesie Toscane leggonsi alcuni graziosi versi fatti da Giulia, men tre era gravemente inferma, in risposta ad un sonetto del Monaldi”.

⁷²⁶ Dolci, 35: “Julia Bona. Etiam Poetrium hanc habuimus; quodque mireris, Italicam. Laudatur a Sabino Bobalio; & inter Carmina Michaelis Mondalis ejusdem graviter aegrotantis Monostropon, cujus do finem: Se il Ciel pietoso, Non da soccorso; Monaldi, e giunto al fin vital mio corso”.

⁷²⁷ Pavel Josef Šafarik, *Paul Jos. Šafarik’s Geschichte der suedslawischen Literatur*, Prag, Verlag fon Friedrich Tempsky, 1864.

⁷²⁸ Marković, 1970.

Gabrielli in her recently published article, already mentioned, “Sister to Sister: Some notes about the ‘canzoniere’ by Speranza di Bona”, 2015.⁷²⁹ For the first time, the long dedicatory epistle is transcribed and translated into Croatian, which represents a highly valuable contribution to the field of women’s writing in the early modern period, both for Italian and Croatian literature.

Apart from this, on the topic of Di Bona’s life and work, there are a few articles written by scholars from different fields in the past few years.⁷³⁰ As already noted, all critics up until this year (Stipčević (2004), Grgić-Maroević (2006), Maroević (2009), Prosperov Novak (2009)) re-presented Speranza di Bona as a woman writer born in Ragusa, whose work should be understood by taking into consideration the position of “a woman relatively educated, who belongs to the middle-high class in sixteenth century Ragusa”.⁷³¹ Novak (2009) goes even further, stating that “In Ragusa, contrary to the social expectation, in the second half of the sixteenth century was formed one very important literary section, in which few women left traces”.⁷³² Moreover, he states, again without any concrete proof, that Speranza di Bona, together with her sister Giulia,

⁷²⁹ Gabrielli, 2015.

⁷³⁰ Articles about Speranza di Bona by modern critics include: Ennio Stipčević, “Odrana rima i ugleda”, *Vijenac*, XII, br. 270, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 2004, available at: www.matica.hr/vijenac/270/Obrana%20rima%20i%20ugleda/, accessed 16 November 2015; Tonko Maroević, “Muzama prkosna. Pjesnicki profil Dubrovkinje Nade Bunić”, *Vijenac*, XII, br. 271, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 2004, available at: www.matica.hr/vijenac/270/Obrana%20rima%20i%20ugleda/, accessed 16 November 2015; Iva Grgić and Tonko Maroević: “Petrarchismo in assenza dell’amore: Il canzoniere di Nada Bunić”, *Petrarka i Petrarkizam u hrvatskoj književnosti*, ur. B. Lucin and M. Tomazović, Split, Književni krug Split, 2006, p. 75-82; Iva Grgić-Maroević, “Speranza di Bona, soggetto nomade dell’Adriatico”, *SRAZ*, 2009, available at: hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=92252, accessed 17 November 2016; Iva Grgić Maroević, “Glas dobre Nade u šesnaestoljetnom Dubrovniku”, *Glasom do feminističkih promjena. Voicing feminist concern*, ed. R. Jambresić Kirin and S. Prlenda, Zagreb, 2009; Slobodan Prosperov Novak, “Je li u slavenskoj renesansi bilo žena”, *Slaveni u Renesansi*, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 2009, pp. 678-683.

⁷³¹ Grgić-Maroević, 2006, 77: “tener conto delle circostanze della vita di una donna relativamente colta appartenente al ceto medio-alto nella Ragusa del Cinquecento, nonché della situazione in cui visse questa particolare donna”.

⁷³² Novak, 2009, 678: “U Dubrovniku se tako, usuprot društvenim očekivanjima, u drugoj polovici 16. stoljeća formirao vrlo značajan ženski književni krug u kojima je nekoliko žena ostavilo zanimljivih književnih tragova”.

as well as with Maria Gondola, and Fiora Zuzzori⁷³³ were “the real muses to Ragusan stoic philosophers and poets of mannerism at the end of the sixteenth century”.⁷³⁴

4.4 Paratext

The title of Speranza di Bona’s book, as we can conclude from the errata sheet where she laments so many mistakes present in the book, was given by the printer. She writes: “As the book did not have a title, these sirs from the press gave it the name”.⁷³⁵ The long title explains the main theme of the book: the defence of rhymes and prose written by Speranza. Apart from the dedicatory epistle, the only prose text signed by Speranza di Bona is her letter to Gioanbattista Pagano. In both prose texts she reacts against Manfredonian society. The defence, as explained in the second part of the title, is of course connected with her adversaries; in this case it refers to one who tried to spread infamy in his verses. From the title the reader can assume that there was writing attacking the honour of the Di Bona family being circulated in printed or in manuscript form, and because of that Speranza di Bona decided to publish her answer in defence. According to the title she defended herself against both verses and prose.

There can be four main aims in selecting the running title, as explained by Day: “for advertising purposes; for religious persuasion; to guide readers’ reception of the text; and to engage in polemic, whether political, satirical, xenophobic or religious”.⁷³⁶ The title of Speranza di Bona’s book consists of the word “defence” repeated two times, “defence of rimes and proses”, as well “in defence of her honour” and against someone

⁷³³ See Chapter 2.

⁷³⁴ Novak, 2009, 681: “bila je stvarna muza dubrovačkih stoičkih mislilaca i manirističkih pjesnika s konca 16. stoljeća.”

⁷³⁵ Di Bona, *errata corrige*: “Benche nome all’opra dato non havea, quei signori nella stampa secondo la considerazione loro l’hanno denominata”.

⁷³⁶ Matthew Day, “‘Intended to Offenders’: the running titles of early modern books”, Smith and Wilson, eds, 34-47.

who tarnished her/their honour. Printing was very important in promoting women's writing, but mostly it had commercial motivations.⁷³⁷ According to Gabrielli, the printer's insisting on the concept of defence in the title of the book could be connected with the importance and actuality of the woman question, and the publisher's strategy to better sell the book.⁷³⁸ Speranza di Bona, as explained in the errata sheet, did not have anything against the title chosen by the press, but in fact she was complaining because of too many errors in the book, explaining that fact "as one more planned snare by her wicked homeland".⁷³⁹ The fact that she accused her homeland for the presence of mistakes in her book is interesting, more because it is possible to find the same accusation in Di Gozze's works.⁷⁴⁰ Therefore, the word 'defence' in the title, being the choice of the press, in many ways influenced the reading of the book, and served as the readers' guide to the text.

4.4.1 The dedicatory epistle

The dedicatory epistle consists of 22 folios, which is almost one third of the book, as Di Bona's book consists of 71 folios (every second page is enumerated) plus 3 pages (2 folios) of handwritten errata. The title of the dedicatory epistle consists of the apostrophe, where virtuosity and magnificence are pointed out, followed by a *salutatio* by Speranza di Bona. The duplication of the word "Sir" in the title, "to the very magnificent, and virtuous Sir, Sir Michele Luccari Nobile, the Ragusan",⁷⁴¹ points our attention to the inseparability of the name of the chosen dedicatee and his belonging to the high class. In line with the accepted prefatory rhetoric at the time, using "the

⁷³⁷ See Cox, 2013, 25.

⁷³⁸ Gabrielli, 2015, 101.

⁷³⁹ Di Bona, *errata corrige*: "Ma qual che mi spiace, oltre l'esser per se stessa rozza, son li tanti errori che l'hanno talmente corrotta ch'apena s'intende et fra le incredibili insidie de la scelerata Patria".

⁷⁴⁰ See Chapter 2.

⁷⁴¹ Di Bona, 2r: "Al molto magnifico, et virtuoso, signore, il signor Michele Luccari Nobile Raguseo".

rhetoric of the *personal motive*”,⁷⁴² Speranza di Bona offers to the reader the reasons which led her to publish the present book. She attracts the attention of the reader by repeating that the wicked people are unknown, but constantly pointing that there were some who might be responsible for the injustice done to her family, without naming what kind of injustice it was. Capturing the reader’s attention, Di Bona then explains her *causa scribendi*: she reacts against an old lie connected with the reaction of Manfredonian society which started when she wrote a pro-Spanish answer poem to Virginia Salvi,⁷⁴³ and also against some kind of plagiarism, as somebody published letters under name of the family Di Bona.⁷⁴⁴ And finally, she has decided to reveal the truth. She decided “to inscribe the truth on a small paper to make it visible to all people”,⁷⁴⁵ as once engraved on paper, “the truth of our home”⁷⁴⁶ can become visible not just to many, but, in Speranza’s words it will “be manifested to all”.⁷⁴⁷

In line with the main sources of the *captatio benevolentiae*, the narrator’s ethical self-presentation (*ab nostra*) is opposed to her opponents (*ab adversiorum*). Di Bona introduces “wicked people”⁷⁴⁸ who lived in her own “homeland”, who in their verses and letters falsely accused her and her family and used her name (and the name of her sisters and father) to sign certain letters and poems.⁷⁴⁹ She also mentions, although this part is not clear, that some of those poems were musically composed. She writes about a certain “testament in 12 stanzas” signed by a certain Speranza, and her

⁷⁴² Dunn, 2.

⁷⁴³ Di Bona, 2v.

⁷⁴⁴ Di Bona, 3r.

⁷⁴⁵ Di Bona, 2r: “Percio ch’essendo l’intento mio solo d’aprire la verità de la casa nostra a queglii, che con si falsi argomenti da tutta una patria fabricati, gli l’hanno tanto occolta tenuta, mi sono questa ragione risoluta in picciol foglio scolpirla, accio si manifesti à tutti, ond’io mi redo (sic) certa ch’a comparatione di quello che poscia si discovrirà quasi breve lume al sole”.

⁷⁴⁶ Di Bona, 11r: “manifestare al mondo la verità di la casa nostra”.

⁷⁴⁷ Di Bona, 2r: “accio si manifesti à tutti”.

⁷⁴⁸ In the original the word is “*scellerati*”, used by the author when referring to people who caused infamy to her and her family.

⁷⁴⁹ Di Bona, 3r: “che gli hanno con lettere sotto nome nost. et altre circostanze in favor loro contra di noi essercitati et in maniera è questo inganno ordinato”.

intention, among other things, is to explain that she never wrote such kind of work;⁷⁵⁰ the wicked person who used their name and falsely signed those verses and prose, somehow gained money. She publicly appeals that if anyone took the money, to give it back. The identity of those wicked people was unknown to Speranza and to her family, but throughout the text she alludes to one person, as noted by Gabrielli,⁷⁵¹ to whom she dedicated one sonnet “To the fraudulent A.N.”.⁷⁵² The ideal punishment for these wicked people would be expulsion, “we would make them to be expelled”,⁷⁵³ and to make them to give back the money they took from the others.

Speranza di Bona provides us with important testimony regarding her and her sister Giulia’s writing activity. Firstly, within the topos of modesty, Speranza admits that she “takes delight” in writing in the vernacular.⁷⁵⁴ She adds that her younger sister, Giulia, also wrote verses for pleasure.⁷⁵⁵ But in both cases the verb “to take delight” is followed by adverb “a little”. This is a typical rhetorical strategy, or in Dunn’s⁷⁵⁶ words, “Topos number one: the author prefers *otium negotium*”. She points out that although she writes, she would never take something for that virtue.⁷⁵⁷ She writes: “everyone should believe that I would never do it for the utility, neither if someone would give me all the world”.⁷⁵⁸ Moreover, she gives very important data about a kind of literary networking, claiming that her verses were seen not only by her sisters, but were sent and exchanged with other poets, usually her father’s colleagues. Speranza states: “and about

⁷⁵⁰Di Bona, 7v: “anco per un testamento in dodeci stanze distinto tutto pieno di confusioni et di cio tocca enigmatamante parlando et nominandosi Speranza”.

⁷⁵¹Gabrielli, 2015, 84.

⁷⁵²Di Bona, 45r: “Al fraudolente A.N.” The sonnet opens with following words: “Empio di stratogemme e dirò albergo / onde deriva il mal che si devora”.

⁷⁵³Di Bona, 16r: “havrebbemo fatto venire una scomunica ad essi”.

⁷⁵⁴Di Bona, 2v: “per tormi il tempo, a turbar la quiete a quel poco che mi diletto di cose volgare”.

⁷⁵⁵Di Bona, 19r: she explains that in this anthology there are verses by Giulia who “se diletta un poco”.

⁷⁵⁶Dunn, 4.

⁷⁵⁷Di Bona, 18v: “Percioche non ho molto a certi miei sonetti fatti in risposta, senza altro interesse in senso di virtù”.

⁷⁵⁸Di Bona, 18v: “non creda alcuno ch’io per utile l’avrebbe esercitato [...] non creda persona del mondo”.

them [her verses] knew only my sisters; or people recommended by my father”.⁷⁵⁹

Regarding the possibility that somewhere texts signed by her appeared, she writes:

“even if somebody imitated my hand [...] which will not be easy to discover, my sisters never did anything (connected with writings) in any way, apart from that collection with the sonnets written by the small one, who sometimes writes a bit, as it will be seen here”.⁷⁶⁰ Speranza di Bona decided to publish these verses because she was afraid of a pirated version. The same topos which might be understood in its function of modesty can be found in many works such as those by Castiglione, or Vittoria Colonna.⁷⁶¹ She needed to provide a justification for her daring to appear in print. Writing about her verses, using the topos of modesty, Bona claims: “I composed them as it was said by nature”,⁷⁶² pointing out that she would never receive any money for that. Her aim was “only to reveal the truth” about her family, which gives the impression of a continuous excuse for publishing her and her sisters’ verses, as it was a way to publish them without being thought unchaste. Di Bona decided to publish the work to defend her honour, or chastity, while at the same time, paradoxically, she needed to defend also her daring to be published, as that added to the risk of being proclaimed unchaste. In order to reveal the truth “to those who are capable of understanding it”⁷⁶³ (therefore to the privileged reader) she decided to collect all her verses and to publish them: “I convinced myself to stain print as everyone could understand it”.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁵⁹ Di Bona, 18v: “Come per se stessi si manifestano ne persona gli ha saputi eccetto le sorelle mie et quei che ne son fuora il piu per man di mio padre ho dati a persone proprie”.

⁷⁶⁰ Di Bona, 19r: “ché, s’alcuno harà imitata la mano mia, per esser fuora, il che trovare forse non sarà difficile, le sorelle mie non l’hanno esercitato in modo alcuno eccetto in quel raccolto ci sono i sonetti di propria mano de la piccola, che si diletta un poco, che si vedranno qui”.

⁷⁶¹ It was in 1475 that the first female-authored book was printed in Italy, and in 1568 “the first printed volume of music composed by women” appeared, as mentioned by Cox, 2015, 12.

⁷⁶² Di Bona, 18v: “come per se stessi si manifestano”.

⁷⁶³ Di Bona, 2r: “Benche io veggia appertamente, virtuoso signore, quanto una invecchiata buggia, si sforzi torre il luogo alla verità [...] che ella tosto che vien toccata non saglia fuori et lucidissima s’appresenti al giudicio di quegli che capaci ne sono”.

⁷⁶⁴ Di Bona, 18v: “Mi sono indutta imbrattar la stampa accio possa ogn’uno la verità scorgere”.

Regarding the material presence of the other work by Speranza di Bona, she writes that there was a “collection”⁷⁶⁵ she sent to Ragusa with the longer version of the text written by her, “and I already made a collection of more delicate things, which is thousand times bigger than this which remains”,⁷⁶⁶ but which was lost, never reaching the addressee. It is interesting that the addressee was a woman, the cousin of her father.⁷⁶⁷ The dedicatory epistle, Di Bona writes, corresponded with the sending of a manuscript. In fact, she wrote that this version of the dedication is the shorter one, as previously she sent one manuscript with a longer dedicatory epistle to a woman in Ragusa – the cousin of “maternal ancestors of my Father”,⁷⁶⁸ who might have been interested in her literature. That woman never received it, as at the time “she passed to a better life”.⁷⁶⁹

All the text of the dedicatory epistle is based on different kind of oppositions. The family Di Bona is opposed to the wicked people from their homeland, and consequently their honour and chastity is clearly opposed to the falseness and envy of the other, the wicked people. Their “art of pretending” and “falsity”, as “there is not a boy or a girl who is not learned or educated of the art of how [to] dissemble and pretend”.⁷⁷⁰ The inhabitants of Manfredonia are not only false in regards to the family Di Bona, but to everyone.⁷⁷¹ According to the narrator, Speranza di Bona, they used her family’s name in order to bring them shame. Although the identity of the wicked people is unknown, Speranza di Bona accuses everyone “both citizen or forester, vassal or

⁷⁶⁵ Di Bona, 19r: “raccolto”.

⁷⁶⁶ Di Bona, 11v: “Et già n’haveva fatto un brevissimo raccolto de le piu lieve cose che non è la milesima parte di quel che resta”.

⁷⁶⁷ See Gabrielli, 2015.

⁷⁶⁸ Di Bona, 19r: “c’ha mio Padre de gli Avi suoi materni havuta”.

⁷⁶⁹ Di Bona, 19r: “ella essere a miglior vita passata”.

⁷⁷⁰ Di Bona, 20r: “non e fanciullo ne feminella che non sia dotta et instrutta di l’arte in sapere dissimulare et fingere”.

⁷⁷¹ Di Bona, 20v: “Ma oltra ch’in questa causa tutta la terra equalmente a tutti e falsissima”.

servant or whoever comes from the benefited class, he is a traitor”.⁷⁷² To these negative qualities of the other, the positive qualities of the Di Bona family are opposed: “unique honesty”,⁷⁷³ “Christian and as the Spartan Republic”.⁷⁷⁴ Moreover, a hyperbolic description of their home as “the example of rare honesty”,⁷⁷⁵ “which could have acquired the eternal honour”,⁷⁷⁶ “the house of such a goodness, which has always been faithful to the pleasures of honesty”⁷⁷⁷ relates to truth, “the Truth of our home”.⁷⁷⁸ In short, the honesty of the female members of the family is opposed to the envy and falseness of the society. Or, better to say, empowered by her socially accepted virtue of chastity, embodied by modesty and naiveté, Speranza di Bona, the secular unmarried woman, found her way to appear in print.

The usage of ‘inclusive language’ here is obvious. “We sisters” are mentioned as honest and chaste women. Two of them write letters and poetry, Giulia and Speranza. They are represented as “chaste”, “innocent”⁷⁷⁹ and sometimes naïve. The opposite qualities compared with theirs, are those of the cruel⁷⁸⁰ and wicked people. “We have always been because of our innocence without any suspicion”.⁷⁸¹ At the first place, there is the family – we the honest and chaste family, we daughters and we sisters – and in opposition to the family there are them, the wicked people. The “envy” relates to “those wicked people”.⁷⁸² Their envy, malice, but most of the all, their hypocrisy is

⁷⁷² Di Bona, 20r: “o sia cittadino o forastiero, o vasallo o servitore o beneficiato, trovara quel esser un traditore”.

⁷⁷³ Di Bona, 2v: “Singolar franchezza”.

⁷⁷⁴ Di Bona, 3r-3v: “la c. n. sempre si è christianamente, et in se stessa a guisa de la Spartana Republica governata”.

⁷⁷⁵ Di Bona, 11r: “casa, esempio di rarissima honesta”.

⁷⁷⁶ Di Bona, 11r: “che se n’havrebbe potuto eterno honore acquistare”.

⁷⁷⁷ Di Bona, 12r: “sotto nome d’una casa di tanta bonta, c’ha sempre tenuto è tiene il colto de le dilitie di honesta che de l’esser et non de l’apparenza ne diletamo avessero”.

⁷⁷⁸ Di Bona, 6r: “la Verita de la casa nostra”.

⁷⁷⁹ Di Bona, 6v: “l’innocenza nostra”.

⁷⁸⁰ Di Bona, 6v: “la costoro crudelta”.

⁷⁸¹ Di Bona, 10r: “Noi siamo state per l’innocenza nostra sempre senza alcun sospetto”.

⁷⁸² Di Bona, 2v: “invidia di certi scelerati”.

something that Speranza di Bona was writing against, as “they said good things about us, and later did bad things”.⁷⁸³ After that injustice, “the strange silence, covered under the colour of honesty”⁷⁸⁴ and under the “false image”⁷⁸⁵ lasted for long.

Using the rhetoric of *amplificatio*, the author clearly points out that wicked people are responsible and that “they are making the seal of their lies”.⁷⁸⁶ Apart from repeating the word *scellerati* (wicked people) who nobody should believe, regardless of their status, the sentence “both citizen or forester, vassal or servant or whoever of he benefited class, he is a traitor”⁷⁸⁷ is repeated twice in the text. The second time it is in the plural, adding another group of opposed social groups, “religious or secular”.⁷⁸⁸ To highlight the falsity of her compatriots, she mentions: “that there is not a labourer or laundress who does not know the specific deceit of everyone”.⁷⁸⁹ It is not possible to see their falsity immediately as it is under “the strange silence, covered under the colour of honesty”.⁷⁹⁰ How difficult it was for the family Di Bona can be read in the powerful comparison “to suffer anguish which could not be suffered more neither in Turkey”.⁷⁹¹ When writing about the hope in God, Speranza di Bona believes that his “clarity” (“*chiarezza*”) will come with “gravitas” (“*gravezza*”) and will compensate for his “lateness” (“*tardanza*”) with the strong repetition of the final syllable, “za”, using the rhetorical figure of rhyme.

⁷⁸³ Di Bona, 3r: “col dire di noi bene, per haver logo da oprar male”.

⁷⁸⁴ Di Bona, 3r: “strano silentio, sotto colore d’honesta coperto”.

⁷⁸⁵ Di Bona, 3r: “falsa imago”.

⁷⁸⁶ Di Bona, 3v: “ne fanno sigillo di lor buggie”.

⁷⁸⁷ For the original see note 799 of this thesis.

⁷⁸⁸ Di Bona, 21r-21v: “sian cittadini o forastieri o religiosi o secolari o vasalli o servitori sia di qual si voglia grado si trovaranno falcissimi tutti”.

⁷⁸⁹ Di Bona, 21v: “che non è facchino ne lavandaia che non sappia l’inganno particolare di ciascuno”.

⁷⁹⁰ Di Bona, 3r: “di strano silentio, sotto colore d’honesta coperto”.

⁷⁹¹ Di Bona, 3: “offrendo travagli ch’in Turchia non s’havrebene sofferti maggiori”.

The noun “shield” is used to describe the wicked people. They “used the silence as the shield”,⁷⁹² and furthermore they “turn the shield of their betrayal”,⁷⁹³ “they have shields”⁷⁹⁴ in front of them, in order not to be recognized. “The wicked people found that diabolic practice”⁷⁹⁵ and “diabolic way”⁷⁹⁶ and they “would like to introduce the other in the labyrinth of their deceit”.⁷⁹⁷ Apart from the wicked people, there are also “the other persons, (only to us unknown)”.⁷⁹⁸ However, those other represented “The public voice”,⁷⁹⁹ sometimes highlighted by the fact that the other people would speak about their family, but in their absence;⁸⁰⁰ this is connected with the family’s public fame, which they “appreciate more than life”.⁸⁰¹ The family, as has already been mentioned, did not have male members, apart from the father, who at the time of writing the dedicatory epistle was ill. The rhetoric used by Speranza di Bona in describing this is highly emblematic: “as far as for us who do not have anyone”.⁸⁰² Being without male members (brothers and husbands) meant to live without protection, and therefore without any power.

Envy is the main characteristic of people from Manfredonia (Siponto), which is also one of the main themes in her poetry. In the poem to the judge Signor Gioanbattista Pagano,⁸⁰³ she writes about the envy of people from Manfredonia, writing one more time that envy started when she wrote the poem in favour of Carlo V, answering Virginia de Salvi’s poem. In her stanza to the lady Donna Violanta d’Angeretta she calls

⁷⁹² Di Bona, 14r: “hanno silenzio per schermo”.

⁷⁹³ Di Bona, 4r: “percioche gli scelerati sotto nome nostro gli girano in schermo de tradimento loro”.

⁷⁹⁴ Di Bona, 15r: “tanto ci hanno schermi”.

⁷⁹⁵ Di Bona, 9v: “Ma questi scelerati c’haveano trovato questo diabolico essercitio”.

⁷⁹⁶ Di Bona, 16r: “si diabolico modo”.

⁷⁹⁷ Di Bona, 15v: “Percio vorrebene il mondo nel laberinto de l’inganno loro”.

⁷⁹⁸ Di Bona, 6r: “altre persone (solo a noi accolte)”.

⁷⁹⁹ Di Bona, 3v: “per torne ogni sospetto in voce pubblica”.

⁸⁰⁰ Di Bona, 14v: “habbiamo scoperto che fanno voce publica”.

⁸⁰¹ Di Bona, 16r: “la fama insieme che piu che la vita stimiamo”.

⁸⁰² Di Bona, 4v: “quanto a noi che non abbiamo nessuno”.

⁸⁰³ Di Bona, 56r-56v: “Al signor Giudice Gioambattista Pagano”.

people from Sipoto “foolish and blind”,⁸⁰⁴ and when writing about the death of Francesco Braccaccio she complains about people from the place, and compares them with snakes in the second sonnet. She represents Siponto as a place invaded by snakes,⁸⁰⁵ and virtue is directly opposed to ‘envy’. It is mentioned also in the answer-sonnet to the unidentified Prospero Reno Nocerino.⁸⁰⁶ This poetical dialogue is worth emphasizing, as Nocerino highly praises the literary talent of Speranza di Bona, calling her an “undiscovered treasure, and hidden virtue”.⁸⁰⁷

This defence is connected with the three direct favours Speranza di Bona asks of her readers.⁸⁰⁸ First, to return money, if ever they received it:⁸⁰⁹ “I beg those people who gave not only hundred or ten ducats, but anything minimal, to ask that money back”.⁸¹⁰ Second, that if there were people who are interested in the truth about their family to ask them directly and not to believe the rumours, and finally if anybody finds the letters or poetry signed in their name, and not presented in this book, to let them know, “to allow us to see it, because our solemn desire is to know which subject they gave to our house and nonetheless to make known the Truth”.⁸¹¹ These three favours asked by the author are connected with the important function of the dedicatory text, to ensure that the text is read properly, or to ensure it is read in a way the author wants it to be read.

⁸⁰⁴ Di Bona, 32r: “e’l sipontino popol stolto e cieco”.

⁸⁰⁵ Di Bona, 54r: “e con chiaro splendor vedrasi come/virtù s’acquista in ciel beato scanno/mentre d’invidia qui si orna le chiome”.

⁸⁰⁶ Di Bona, 56v-57r.

⁸⁰⁷ Di Bona, 56v: “Tesoro non trovato e virtù ascosa”.

⁸⁰⁸ As noted by Gabrielli, 2015, 106-107.

⁸⁰⁹ We read that those wicked people probably published verses under the name of Speranza di Bona or her sisters, and through this gained some money, taking it from innocent people. Speranza di Bona asks them to give back that money to the people they took it from, or the people who gave that money to ask for it back.

⁸¹⁰ Di Bona, 16r-16v: “Supplico quelle persone che han dato non solo centinaio o decina di ducati ma ogni minima cosa si facciano rendere”.

⁸¹¹ Di Bona, 22r: “chiunque si trova sotto Nome nostro lettere a Versi ce li conceda vedere che sommo desiderio è il nostro di sapere che soggetto han dato de la casa nostra non meno che di far nota la Verità”.

Oratio recta or direct speech is used without any mark or punctuation, “that he, as he met our servant told to her what does your patron have against me that she is trying to make me killed and why she does not resolve yes or no, and this same was also in music, asked by her what he replied, as you do not know I would not tell it to you.”⁸¹² With this use of *oratio recta*, the importance of the event which occurred is highlighted, and “authority and verisimilitude [...] writers employed such imaginative speeches to call attention to the information thus conveyed”.⁸¹³

When writing about her verses the topos of modesty is obvious: Speranza di Bona used the topos of modesty or the self-effacing topos, typical for this genre. Speranza the narrator explained a few times why she was compelled to publish such a text and also all her books, expressing “reluctance to appear in print”.⁸¹⁴ In her words, the long dedicatory epistle became small paper; she was determined to imprint it in this small folio. The “small folio” is the very long dedicatory epistle, consisting of 22 folios. The phrase “small folio” is can be read in many dedicatory texts, with small variations: “*picciol fascio*”.⁸¹⁵ For example, Machiavelli dedicated his *Principe* to Lorenzo di Piero di Medici, and wrote that his writings are in a small volume reduced. Such a practice “enabled the project of the authoring women by allowing her to code her authorial act [...] as the products of humble and inferior femininity.”⁸¹⁶

Writing about how she decided to print her own work, Speranza di Bona tries to present herself as a person “defective in knowledge”, but her work betrays the

⁸¹² Di Bona, 7v-8r: “s’intese in giusta maniera ch’incontrando egli un giorno la creata nostra le disse: che ha contra di me la padrona tua che cerca farmi ammazzare et perche non mi risolve a sì ò a nò, et questo istesso ne le musiche conteneva, dimandato da lei di che cosa le rispose poscia che tu non lo sai manco tel voglio dire”.

⁸¹³ See Margareth Cotter Lynch, *Reading Memory and Identity in the Texts of Medieval European Holy Women*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 111.

⁸¹⁴ Eckerle, 101.

⁸¹⁵ Terzoli, 165.

⁸¹⁶ Eckerle, 97-114.

opposite.⁸¹⁷ She writes: “I wrote them on the basis of necessity without study or delight”.⁸¹⁸ At the very end of the dedicatory epistle, as an act of excuse, Di Bona writes that although she and her family do not know who those wicked people were, to publish this book remained the only way to defend the truth: “without having the other way, and without knowing who they were, by extreme I was forced with so difficult subject to ban my ignorance, as firstly here we tried everything using the truth”.⁸¹⁹ The attempt to justify the book’s publication by reference to the truth was one of the most frequently employed strategies in the early modern period, together with the rhetoric of modesty, based “on a simple inversion: the less physical, social, or political power one presents oneself as having, the more rhetorical power one has”.⁸²⁰

That Speranza di Bona defended not only her family but also herself, can be seen from the very beginning, when she states that what happened to her, as the woman Speranza di Bona, cannot have had happened to any other woman in the world. Once again, the self-fashioning goes toward the uniqueness of the female subject:

I do not believe that any Woman under the sky in whatever time she lived, had survived such a strange and cruel persecution which is impossible to find between the other barbarous cruelties, only because of the virtue, and they used all extreme ways against us in order to ruin the Life and to diminish the fortune in order to oppress the Virtue.⁸²¹

⁸¹⁷ Eckerle, 107.

⁸¹⁸ Di Bona, 18v: “accio possa ogn’uno la verità scorgere et i versi miei quali essi sieno per maggior sganno vedranno qui tutti che già sol per tenere del soggetto appo Noi memoria hò fatti secondo l’occorrenza senza studio o diletto come per se stessi si manifestano ne persona gli ha saputi eccetto le sorelle mie et quelli che ne son fuori il più per man di mio padre ho dati a persone proprie”.

⁸¹⁹ Di Bona, 22r: “non avendo l’altro modo ne sapendo chi quegli sieno per estremo son constretta con sì duro soggetto bandire l’ignoranza mia dopo haver Noi fatto qui prima con la verità ogni sforzo”.

⁸²⁰ Dunn, 6.

⁸²¹ Di Bona, 11r: “non credo che la Donna sopra la faccia de la terra in alcun tempo si truovi c’habbia per Virtù passata sì strana et crudel persecutione che tra barbare crudeltà non trofarebbe uguale che quanti modi estremi si ponno tener in angustiar la Vita et debilitar la fortuna per opprimer la Virtù”.

She defends her good reputation and honour. The concept of honour (either personal or public) is always connected with reputation.⁸²² The concept of gendered honour within Mediterranean communities merits further analysis, as does the idea of “shame cultures”,⁸²³ to better understand the reputation defended by Speranza di Bona. In the title of the book, the noun “*infamia*” (“infamy”) appears. The fact that this word appears only in the title, and does not appear in the body of the text, is important in order to read the social position of Speranza di Bona and women in general. She did not choose the title; the printer decided it for her, which was common practice in early modern times. Somebody who tried to bring her shame with his rhymes is the person responsible for the appearance of this book. Dishonour or “lack of honourable standing”,⁸²⁴ as we can read, was connected with social role, and it demanded a public denial – the defence. *L’infamia facti*, or infamy, which derived from bad reputation of a person within society, meant loss of good name. In order to get it back, now or in the future, Speranza di Bona decided to publish this book. The reader who knows to understand the truth is the privileged reader and the only who can judge.⁸²⁵ Here Genette’s metaphor for paratext, the threshold, becomes useful. This dedicatory epistle, as threshold, communicates with the reader, who should mediate between peritext and epitext. As it was space used for defence of a concrete case, the legal function of this epistle, as well as the whole book, becomes important.

The meaning of the concept of honour was changing throughout history. In the medieval period, honour was understood as “a right to respect, as a social prestige or as

⁸²² See *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, Margaret Schaus, ed., Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages, London, 2006.

⁸²³ Schaus, ed, 376: Apart from the “shame cultures” there are also “guilt cultures”, where the accent is on a person’s internal sense of right and wrong; in the first group this is provoked by external factors and unwritten honour codes.

⁸²⁴ Schaus, ed., 376: “Lack of honourable standing (*infamia* or infamy) caused one to forfeit legal privileges, such as the right to inherit, to hold office, to testify, or to serve as a legal guardian”.

⁸²⁵ Di Bona, 2r: “la verità [...] lucidissima s’appresenti al giudizio di quegli che capaci ne sono”.

good reputation”.⁸²⁶ In the later Middle Ages it was connected with inner moral qualities. It is impossible to separate one’s honour from one’s reputation. Reputation had a legal dimension (Lat. *fama* – reputation). There were many ways of depriving a person of honourable status, prescribed by law or encoded in unwritten, but sometimes more powerful, sets of rules. As in the Middle Ages and later on, honour needed to be defended if lost or besmirched, and public humiliation was considered the main threat. Honour was always “socially constructed and determined by the judgement of the others, particularly social equals. Moreover, honour was often gendered”.⁸²⁷ We read that Speranza di Bona justified her life and work according to certain standards of being the member of an honourable family and moreover being an honourable woman, which always implied the concept of “chastity”. There is something which Jones calls “social usefulness of chastity”,⁸²⁸ which it might be useful to mention here:

the supreme importance of chastity to a woman was most clearly shown to its linking with honor. In women honor and chastity were exchangeable term.

Honor for both men and women was something external, a good name, for men reputation for excellence in many things, for women only in one thing, chastity [...] he could seek redress in the duel, but a woman, though wrongly accused, could only hide her shame in perpetual seclusion.⁸²⁹

However, we can read from Speranza di Bona’s dedicatory epistle, that she was defending the honour of herself and her family in reacting to the insults which now or later needed to be repaid. And that repayment would by necessity come, as long as it was written, and/or published. Entire social communities could blame people who in some way transgressed its norms, but as men could defend themselves thorough a set of

⁸²⁶ Schaus, ed, 375.

⁸²⁷ Schaus, ed, 376.

⁸²⁸ Jones, 75

⁸²⁹ Kelso, 90-91.

aggressive modes, women, especially in Mediterranean societies, could defend their honour only through their own body, and specifically the chastity of that body.⁸³⁰ As Speranza di Bona, at the time she wrote the dedicatory epistle, was probably thirty-three years old and unmarried, if we accept the contextual conclusions of Gabrielli, she decided to defend her and her sisters' chastity, traditionally considered more important than marriage, and more important than life. How important marriage was for her can be read in the dedicatory epistle. Although all the Di Bona sisters were unmarried, she points out that it was not true that their mother did not want to marry off her daughters, so that was one more thing she wanted to defend. Marriage was strictly connected with social connections and power. According to Gabrielli it was the idea of wicked people to isolate the Di Bona sisters, and not being married meant the non-existence of social boundaries.⁸³¹

One of the main topoi in this dedicatory epistle is the defence of and the importance of truth regarding the Di Bona family. In order to explain the truth, Speranza di Bona transgresses the norm, and appears in public with her book. Also, she explains that it was first her mother, "*madama*", who physically went out in a public space to speak about the injustice which happened to their family. Her mother spoke to a foreigner, transgressing in such a way social norms, or in Speranza's words, "did another extreme",⁸³² but as she did not manage to convince him, Speranza di Bona decided to publish the book with the explanation of the truth. For women during the early modern period, as well as before and for centuries later, talking outside the private domain of home, with a stranger, was forbidden, and was often connected with the act

⁸³⁰ In *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. Joan G. Peristiany, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966.

⁸³¹ Gabrielli, 2015, 163.

⁸³² Di Bona, 4v: "fece ella un'altro estremo".

of prostitution, as concluded by Jones.⁸³³ Jones goes further, stating that “men’s access to women’s speech makes access to their bodies possible as well”.⁸³⁴ This was especially important for women who were not married, because the private space and the father’s control needed to be respected until the legal control of the woman was handed to another man, the husband.

The representation of the private and the public space with its representatives in this dedicatory epistle is emblematic. The private space was mainly reserved for nobles and women from the middle class, to which Speranza di Bona belonged, while the servant, to whom one sonnet is dedicated, is represented as the one who had the possibility of participating in the outside world. The mother, together with the servant, are the only two female figures who have some kind of the access to the outside world. Mentioning only the two of them, and not herself or her sisters, proves the hypothesis that the Di Bona sisters did not have any other means to react against the injustice of the outside world, apart from writing and publishing the written text, “as we have always been pulled back from every practice because of onesty, and because of it we offer our presence to every justification”.⁸³⁵

As the opposite to the truth there is a lie invented by wicked people, but more, there is a falsity: “they said good things about us, and later they did bad things”,⁸³⁶ and “they covered their crime with our name”.⁸³⁷ The voice of truth, or in the author’s words “the truth of our home”,⁸³⁸ is reserved to Speranza di Bona, in the first place: “I give myself to the truth”.⁸³⁹ Apart from Speranza di Bona’s voice, the other voices of truth

⁸³³ Jones, 21.

⁸³⁴ Jones, 21.

⁸³⁵ Di Bona, 19r: “benche Noi siamo state sempre da ogni prattica retirete per cagione d’honesta, et per questa offeremo la presenza nostra a ogni giustificatione”.

⁸³⁶ Di Bona, 3r: “Col dire di noi bene, per aver luogo da oprar male”.

⁸³⁷ Di Bona, 15v: “coprendo la sceleranza loro col nome nostro”.

⁸³⁸ Di Bona, 4v: “la verità de la casa nostra”.

⁸³⁹ Di Bona, 8r: “mi rimetto a la verità”.

belong to the father, mother, sisters, and the servant (*“la creata”*). Di Bona warns her readers: “You should not believe [...] that about our home somebody else could tell you any Truth, apart from Father, and Mother, and Us sisters and the Servant”.⁸⁴⁰ Apart from them, there are two authorities for Speranza di Bona: God and the published book.

The mother is represented as the one who knew the truth, who should be believed, who is the definitive authority for the family.⁸⁴¹ The mother is “in fact the Arc of our house, and it is legitimate that she explains it to the others”.⁸⁴² As already noted by Gabrielli,⁸⁴³ “the Arc” is a biblical term, referring to the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant is also called the Ark of the Testimony, so once more the mother becomes one of two trustful testimonies of the virtues of the Di Bona family. Moreover, the noun “mother” is never used in the text, she is always nominated as *“madama”*. In the Croatian translation the phrase “the madam mother” is used.⁸⁴⁴

The servant (*“la creata”*⁸⁴⁵) is the second person who should be believed when the truth of the family is in question. The servant is obviously female, and as highlighted by Gabrielli, “the servant in the public space takes the role of family members’ eyes and ears”.⁸⁴⁶ Speranza di Bona dedicates one sonnet to their dear servant Domenica, using the same words to describe her as in the dedicatory epistle, as the only honest friend, the only person who “recounted the truth about our home”.⁸⁴⁷ But even beyond that, she is presented as one who is equal to them, as a “member of our home”.⁸⁴⁸ However, unlike the Di Bona family, she had the possibility of speaking in

⁸⁴⁰ Di Bona, 21r: “che de la casa nostra persona del mondo dirà loro Verità alcuna eccetto Padre et Madre et Noi sorelle et la Creata”.

⁸⁴¹ Di Bona, 9v: “Madama, di oltra che come Madre ha l’Autorità”.

⁸⁴² Di Bona, 6v: “essendo ella l’Arca de la verità de la casa nostra et lecito a lei poterla ad altri aprire”.

⁸⁴³ Gabrielli, 160, note 25.

⁸⁴⁴ Gabrielli, 157: “gospodja majka”.

⁸⁴⁵ A reference to the Spanish word “criado”.

⁸⁴⁶ Gabrielli, 170: “Dvorkinja u javnome prostoru obavlja ulogu očiju i ušiju članica obitelji”.

⁸⁴⁷ Di Bona, 3v: “referita la verità de la casa nostra”.

⁸⁴⁸ Di Bona, 15r: “essendo ella pur membro de la casa nostra”.

public, and also she was a connection from the outside world to the inner one. Her honesty and loyalty to the family is highlighted by Di Bona, saying, “she still is honest and sincere, the person who did not do anything, neither did say a word out of our orders, neither she would see or understand something and not tell to us”.⁸⁴⁹ This representation of the woman servant might be understood in line with Di Bona’s self-fashioning, as she also represents the charitable and Christian human woman.

Although it is not clear who the father was, he is mentioned a few times in the dedicatory epistle. We read that, at the time of writing the dedicatory epistle, he was very old and ill.⁸⁵⁰ He is mentioned as a “right person [...] who has always kept correctly his home”,⁸⁵¹ and the one who was attacked by the wicked people, “because the wicked people wanted to snare my Father in order to ruin his work”.⁸⁵²

Two more authorities which should be believed, according to Di Bona, are the published book and God. The written word, and more so the published one, will remain, regardless of time, and will prove the innocence of her and her family. Di Bona explains that her intention was to make truth visible to all: “and I strained myself in order to make known to all, the truth of our home” and “pull out our fame from the shadow of their evil work”.⁸⁵³

Apart from the book, God is represented as the final judge. Alluding to one of Petrarch’s verses from *Triumphus Eternitatis*, 13,⁸⁵⁴ God is presented as one “who is

⁸⁴⁹ Di Bona, 15r: “d’esser leale et sincera che non ha mutato passo ne detto parola senza ordine nostro ne visto o inteso cosa che non l’habbia a Noi riferita”.

⁸⁵⁰ The father’s identity is not clear. According to Grgić and Maroević, 2006, 78, it could have been her father who asked Speranza to write this text vindicating the family’s honour, which could also be the reason why he agreed to cover the cost of the book. In addition, the reason why the family came to Manfredonia is not clear, but it could be, as Grgić and Maroević claim, 2006, 79, connected with business. Moreover, as Gabrielli, 177, mentions, in Manfredonia there was the Consulate of the Ragusan Republic, from 1442 to 1667, where Speranza’s father might have aspired to work (as we read in the dedicatory epistle, Di Bona 19v).

⁸⁵¹ Di Bona, 13r: “una persona giusta qual è mio padre, c’ha sempre giustamente la casa sua mantenuto”.

⁸⁵² Di Bona, 15r: “a l’insidie c’hanno questi scelerati in ogni negocio di mio Padre tenute da farglilo a danno riuscire”.

⁸⁵³ Di Bona, 22r: “trar la fama nostra da l’ombra di loro mal opre”.

⁸⁵⁴ Proved by Gabrielli, 2015, 172.

never late in his grace”.⁸⁵⁵ God is represented as the solemn authority, and although Speranza di Bona points out that everything is left to the action of God’s grace who is “the one who gives all goods”,⁸⁵⁶ and that there should be “temporal and spiritual justice”,⁸⁵⁷ she also decided to react and write in defence, as their home did not have any other obligation other than to the “glorious God”.⁸⁵⁸

whereas I hope that the Lord who one day will break the veil that obscures it and will show its brightness to the world, with seriousness of punishment, he will compensate the delay in punishment of the wicked people, who have always wanted to offend our home and in that they wanted to include the others[.]⁸⁵⁹

As pointed out by Dunn, “God is the only author of good, the only originator. The writer’s attempts at ethical proof always threaten to become both circular – since the only proof of merit is the presence of God’s hand.”⁸⁶⁰ Truth and immortality are strictly connected with God’s hand, the published book, and “the inscription” of the text. The paper is a clear allusion to the materiality of artistic creation. The authority of the printed word should be connected with the author’s authority, and as stressed by the same author, by being printed it will become visible to all. The book, in this case, became the only space where a woman from the middle class could have expressed her ideas against rigid social norms, and against the injustice which happened to her family.

Speranza di Bona states: “But time is the father of truth: if there is something impossible to know today, maybe tomorrow it will be possible to learn [it]”.⁸⁶¹ The

⁸⁵⁵ Di Bona, 16v: “il signore cui gratie non fur mai tarde”.

⁸⁵⁶ Di Bona, 15v: “il dator di tutti i beni”.

⁸⁵⁷ Di Bona, 14r-14v: “giustitia temporale et spirituale”.

⁸⁵⁸ Di Bona, 15v: “Dio Glorioso”.

⁸⁵⁹ Di Bona, 13r: “onde spero nel Signore che un giorno squarciar il vello che li adompra et mostrando la sua chiarezza al mondo con la gravezza de la pena compensara la tardanza in punitiione de gli iniqui l’intento de quali fu sempre d’offendere la casa nostra”.

⁸⁶⁰ Dunn, 2.

⁸⁶¹ Di Bona, 13v: “Ma il tempo è Padre di verita: quel ch’oggi non puo sapersi, forse domani si potra sapere”.

metaphor of time as the father of truth can also be found in the work of two writers who lived in the same century, just fifty years before Speranza di Bona's work was written. These writers are Nicolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) and Baldassare Castiglione. In the dedication of *Il libro del Cortegiano*, Castiglione finishes with praise of the value of time, which can reveal any hidden defects, being the father of the truth, and a judge without any passion.⁸⁶² The same metaphor is also found in Macchiaveli's *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livy* (1531). In this work, in the third chapter of the first volume, writing about the republic and the "malignity" of the people, he states: "but time, which is said to be the father of every truth, will cause it to be discovered".⁸⁶³ This metaphor can also be found in one of Tasso's letters, but he wrote that time could not be the father of truth, but rather that God was: "and if I could hope that by time, falsely by someone thought to be father of the truth, it can become known; I rather think that not time, but God is father of truth".⁸⁶⁴ However, the classical topos of literature known as "the truth as daughter of time", "*veritas filia temporalis*",⁸⁶⁵ can also be found in Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*,⁸⁶⁶ which was widely used by Catholics and Protestants, as a motto for any political or religious change. It is interesting how Iwasaki connects the emblematic tradition of "*veritas filia temporis*" with "the tradition of the Calumniated wife cycle of medieval romances", mentioning Boccaccio, Shakespeare, and Chaucer,⁸⁶⁷ concluding that in "all these stories, a chaste wife, a minion of goddess

⁸⁶² Castiglione, 2013, 11-12: "E se pur i mei accusatori di questo commun giudicio non restano satisfatti, contentisi almeno di quello del tempo; il quale d'ogni cosa al fin scuopre gi occulti diffetti e, per essere padre della verità e giudice senza passione, suol dare sempre della vita o morte delle scritture giusta sentenza".

⁸⁶³ As mentioned in Soji Iwasaki, "'Veritas Filia Temporis' and Shakespeare", *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1973, pp. 249-263, here 250.

⁸⁶⁴ *Lettere scelte di Torquato Tasso biografiche e apologetiche, varie dal 1569 al 1586*, 1860, 120.

⁸⁶⁵ "Veritas filia temporis" is analysed in Giovanni Gentile, in *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1940, 333-355, but mostly in connection with Giordano Bruno's philosophy.

⁸⁶⁶ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, ed. Joseph Devey, New York, E.P. Dutton and Co, [1620], 1996, 62. Bacon states: "With regard to authority, it is the greater weakness to attribute infinite credit to particular authors, and to refuse his own prerogative to time, the author of all authors, and therefore of all authority. For truth is highly named the daughter of time, not of authority".

⁸⁶⁷ Iwasaki, 253.

Nature endowed with beauty, chastity, obedience, patience, is undeservedly victimized by someone's envy or slander, is imprisoned or exiled for a long time, and lives a virtuous life, patient, constant, and faithful to her duties, until at last her chastity and truth are vindicated".

Although it would be difficult to compare the text of the dedication and its narrator Speranza di Bona with the heroines from these stories, the similarity of a few things is obvious, which opens up the possibility of analysing this text only as a work of art. First of all, there is the presence of calumny and envy, and the role of the female heroine is to reveal them; secondly there is the isolation in which the author lived; and thirdly, the list of all the virtues the family possesses is very similar to the virtues of women heroes, which include chastity and patience. In this way, Speranza di Bona made herself to be the "narrator hero", which this narrative poses in one more category (apart from the epistolary, autobiographic genre), namely in homodiegetic narrative. Writing about herself and signing these sentences, Speranza di Bona indeed becomes the hero of her own work.

Apart from this, the encomiastic topos is present, but not, in praise of the virtue of the dedicatee, as was common in the dedicatory genre. The encomium to the dedicatee can only be read in the title of the dedication "to the most virtuous",⁸⁶⁸ and later in the text it is impossible to find it. But the topos of encomia should be looked for, in my opinion, in the description of her family, rather than in the choice of the dedicatee. Speranza di Bona praises honour, chastity, and respect for herself and her family; the chastity of the female members of her family is for her the most important – in her own words, more important than life.

⁸⁶⁸ Di Bona, 2r: "Al molto magnifico et virtuoso signore".

It is worth noting the usage of metaphors connected with Alexander the Great. Trying to explain her will to reveal the truth, at the end of the dedicatory epistle, she writes, “and knowing that this deceit was more entangled than the Gordian knot, and without finding any other way to cut it, I deliberated in this form to cut it”.⁸⁶⁹ The metaphor of the Gordian knot was very often used in literature for describing an intractable problem. It was also popular enough in the dedicatory genre that Terzoli (2010) writes about “the topos of Alexander the Great”, which in her words, “once installed in this literary genre [...] so flexible and functional, will last in dedicatory tradition at least until the dedication by Vincenzo Monti to Napoleon”.⁸⁷⁰ For example, the first dedication of a book in the Italian literary tradition is assigned to Brunetto Latini,⁸⁷¹ and he compared the dedicatee with Alexander the Great.

Apart from Alexander the Great, there is another male figure with whom Speranza di Bona identified herself: Hercules.⁸⁷² At the very end of the dedicatory epistle, Di Bona uses a powerful metaphor of the mythological animal with many heads, the hydra: “the lie with violence together, in guise of the Lernaean Hydra, at place of one head chopped off, regrow seven heads”.⁸⁷³ In fact, the number of heads which would regrow changes according to the source: nine, seven, or fifty. Seven heads were later connected with seven deadly sins as seven heads were chopped off the Hydra by Hercules. Di Bona concludes the dedicatory epistle from her ‘ungrateful homeland’ on

⁸⁶⁹ Di Bona, 20v: “onde io conoscendo questo inganno via piu inestricabil ch’l modo di Gorgio non trovando modo alcuno da poterlo sciorre ho deliberato in questa guisa reciderlo”.

⁸⁷⁰ Terzoli, 2010, 164: “si puo aggiungere che una volta installato in questo genere testuale, il topos di Alessandar, così flessibile e funzionale, durerà nella tradizione dedicatoria almeno fino alle dediche di Vincenzo Monti a Napoleone”.

⁸⁷¹ In his book *Il Tesoretto*. The dedication is written in verse and it is significantly long, 112 verses. “Che tutta la sembianza d’Alessandro tenete”.

⁸⁷² Gabrielli, 2015, 181, points out that it is interesting that she identified herself with two male figures, Alexander the Great and Hercules.

⁸⁷³ Di Bona, 22r: “conosciuta con acerbissima esperienza, che la buggia con la violenza unita, a guisa di una pestifera Idra, in vece d’un capo tronco ne redunda sette, ho preso felicissimo augurio distruggere di questa fiera il corpo intero con quest’arme nel braccio”.

4th September, 1569, without signing, in the hope that she will gain victory, clearly referencing her two names, Speranza and Vittoria.

4.4.2 Five proemial sonnets

The dedicatory epistle is followed by five proemial sonnets also signed by Speranza di Bona. The multiple “dedication written in verses, when it is present, looks more like a short appendix in closing the epistolary dedications, like the element of stylist elevating of the end and not like the independent dedication”.⁸⁷⁴ Explaining the function of these dedications in verse, Terzoli points out that the verses are mainly written in the form of sonnets. They usually open and/or close the book, show the closeness of the dedications of the first edition to the “writing customs of the manuscripts codex, where it was functionally necessary to mark the incipit and the end of the different texts”.⁸⁷⁵ Of these proemial sonnets, two are addressed to Michele Luccari, one to his sister Madalena Luccari,⁸⁷⁶ and the last two are dedicated to the illustrious city of Ragusa.

The first two sonnets represent the encomium of both dedicatee and the city of Ragusa. The first sonnet follows the scheme ABBA ABBA for the octave and CDE CED for the sestet.⁸⁷⁷ This structure did not exist in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, but it was present in the early modern period. The title is the same as the title of the dedication:

⁸⁷⁴ Terzoli, 2010, 171: “Qui la dedica in versi, nei casi in cui è presente, sembra piuttosto una breve appendice posta in chiusura di dediche epistolari, come elemento di innalzamento stilistico del finale e non come la dedica autonoma”.

⁸⁷⁵ Terzoli, 2010, 166-167: “alle consuetudini scritte dei codici manoscritti, dove era funzionalmente necessario marcare l’incipit e l’explicit dei vari testi”.

⁸⁷⁶ According to Gabrielli, 91, Madalena Luccari is Michele’s Luccari sister, and not wife, as was thought.

⁸⁷⁷ This rhyme scheme for the sestet is, in Cox’s words, “a somewhat controversial sixteenth-century novelty”, as the usual scheme was CDE CDE, or CDC DCD, with CDE DCE and CDE EDC – the most usual Petrarchian variants. See Cox, 2013, 52. The scheme used by Speranza di Bona was less often used, according to ALI RASTA database. See rasta.unipv.it/index.php?page=view_autori. In Cox’s recently published collection, *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance*, the same sonnet scheme can be found in the work of six female authors: Gambara, Colonna, Matraini, Della Rovere, Battiferri, Collato. See Virginia Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

“To the very magnificent, and virtuous Mister Michele Luccari noble Ragusan, Speranza Vittoria di Bona”.⁸⁷⁸ She prays for his virtue, and also his homeland, which she calls a “beautiful nest” or “dignified nest”.⁸⁷⁹ The second sonnet is also dedicated to him, with a different (and more common) scheme in the sestet, CDC DCD.

The third sonnet is dedicated to Madalena Luccari, and follows the same scheme as the previous two. It is an encomium to the dedicatee’s sister, the wife of important Ragusan writer Dinko Ranjina. This female-authored poem to another woman was usually reserved for the writer-patron relationship, but here there is a private dedicatee, who lived in Ragusa. It opens with the verses: “Gentle woman who adorns our age with the most precious gifts heavens can give”.⁸⁸⁰ In my opinion, these verses echo the famous correspondence from around 1532 between Veronica Gabara and Vittoria Colonna. Gambara begins with the verse: “Oh unique glory of our age” to which Colonna replies: “Once more, heaven adorns our age with ancient glory.”⁸⁸¹

The other two sonnets, with schemes ABBA ABBA CDE DCE and ABAB ABAB CDC DCD respectively, are encomia to Ragusa, in which its classical name Epidaurus is celebrated and connected with glory, honour, and nobility.

4.5 The poetical content of the book

Following these dedicatory sonnets, the poetical material opens with a poem on the death of Lucrezia di Bona, Speranza’s sister. All verses in this book can be divided in two main groups: *in vita* and *in morte*. Mainly, they are correspondence verses. When encomium is taken into account, there are two main lines: encomium of the rulers and

⁸⁷⁸ Also here the title to Speranza’s name is crossed out, a fact which could be analyzed in line with the topos of modesty.

⁸⁷⁹ Di Bona, 22v: “il fier nido” and “il bel nido”.

⁸⁸⁰ Di Bona, 23r: “Donna gentil che nostra etade adorni / de i pregiati duon ch’il ciel può dare.”

⁸⁸¹ In Cox, 2013, 273: “O de la nostra etade unica gloria” and “Di nuovo il cielo de l’antica Gloria / orna la nostra etade”.

the city of Ragusa, and critique of Siponto or Manfredonia. According to Gabrielli, the poem “*Alle Muse*” is proto-feminist. The fact that within this anthology there is not one love poem is stressed by previous scholarship, but as already pointed out by Gabrielli, who relies on Cox, such a practice was quite normal and in line with “the petrarchist fashion and influenced by Bembo’s reform”.⁸⁸² Gabrielli’s important observations about the technique of *trasmutazione*⁸⁸³ can be seen in three poems by Di Bona: “*Alle muse*”, “*A Siponto*” and “*Lamento di Orlando*”; and a possible connection with other Italian women writers, Laura Terracina and Dianora Sanseverino should be emphasized when the influences and the analysis of the poetical work by Di Bona are taken into consideration. The poetry ‘*in morte*’ is mainly dedicated to mourning death within the familial context, particularly Speranza di Bona’s sisters. According to Gabrielli:

Sixteenth-century mourning poetry for family members and close friends allies itself for the most part with the tradition of occasional verse and may be seen as an intimate counterpart to the much wider category of verse mourning the deaths of public figures, local or national.⁸⁸⁴

In the dedicatory epistle as well as in the letter to Gioanbattista Pagano⁸⁸⁵ Speranza di Bona writes that her answer sonnets to De Salvi were one of the reasons that her homeland started its long “oppression of our home”.⁸⁸⁶ De Salvi wrote two sonnets (*proposta*) with the same rhyme scheme, ABBA ABBA CDC CDC, to which Di Bona replied with four more sonnets (*risposta*) using the same words and rhyme

⁸⁸² Gabrielli, 111: “Tematski izbor Speranze di Bone nije neobičan, jer u zbirkama talijanskih pjesnikinja sredinom šesnaestoga stoljeća, koje, u široko definiranom okviru petrarkističke mode a pod uticajem Bembove reforme, artikuliraju čežnju ženskoga lirskoga subjekta, često zatječemo enkomijastičke i prigodne sastavke”.

⁸⁸³ Cox, 2013, 160-161: *Trasmutazione* refers to “incorporating lines from the source text at regular intervals, in a structured manner”. Such examples among female writers can be found in Laura Terracina’s *Rime* (1548) and Dianora Sanseverino’s pre-1545 poem: “La bella Bradamante che se stessa”, as pointed out by Gabrielli, 2015.

⁸⁸⁴ Cox, 2011, 79.

⁸⁸⁵ Di Bona, 62v.

⁸⁸⁶ Di Bona, 3: “l’oppressione della casa nostra”.

scheme, but expressing completely opposite political ideas. Virginia de Salvi's political view was pro-French and anti-Spanish.

She lived in Siena, which in the first half of the sixteenth century had an important circle of female writers, among which there were female poets who wrote extensively about the political situation. Virginia Salvi was connected by her family's bonds to the ruling structure in Siena, which was pro-French. After 1555, when Siena came under the rule of Florence and Cosimo de Medici, she went into exile in Rome. At the end of the first sonnet, poetically addressing the French king, she writes: "and you will take off the sceptre of Carlo V".⁸⁸⁷

Four sonnets in answer are written by Speranza di Bona in support of Carlo V. In the first sonnet, she claims that he will conquer the "Kingdom of Gaul"⁸⁸⁸ and all Egypt. The next two thematise the death of Carlo V and are independent. This poetical exchange is of high importance, not only because it testifies about the female practice of correspondence verses, and the fact that because of these verses Di Bona in her own words was condemned, but also because these two sonnets by Virginia de Salvi were unknown until last year.⁸⁸⁹ The pro-Spanish view Speranza di Bona defends is obviously connected with her and her family's stay in Manfredonia. The other women with whom Speranza di Bona exchanged verses are still not identified, Cornelia Carrafa⁸⁹⁰ and Donna Catarina Villella d'Aldana.⁸⁹¹ However, fictitious or real, her exchange of poetry with De Salvi and the other women, and some men, whose profession is rarely mentioned, such as physician Innocentio Scinorelli, and judges Anattasio and Gioanbattista Pagano,⁸⁹² even without their answer, provides us with the

⁸⁸⁷ Di Bona, 29v: Virginia Salvi: "è toglierai lo scettro a Carlo quinto".

⁸⁸⁸ Di Bona, 29v: "et hor conquistarà il Gallo regno".

⁸⁸⁹ This last conclusion is made by Gabrielli.

⁸⁹⁰ Di Bona, 40v-41r.

⁸⁹¹ Di Bona, 43r-43v.

⁸⁹² Di Bona 30v-31r, 53v, 56r, 56v, 57v-58r.

testimony that woman author Speranza di Bona could communicate on an equal level with an educated network of people.

4.5.1 Influence

The clear influence of Castiglione, Macchiavelli, Petrarch, Dante, and Ariosto, are witness to contemporary trends in history of reading and writing. Gabrielli (2015) points out that the influence of Laura Terracina (c.1519–1577) on the work of Speranza di Bona should be taken into consideration, leading one to conclude that Terracina should be understood as one of literary models to Speranza di Bona.⁸⁹³ The influence she points out could be seen in the technique of “*tramutazione*” in Ariosto’s verses, which appeared in the southern Italian peninsula in the sixteenth century. Not only this technique, but in some cases the same addressee of the sonnets,⁸⁹⁴ and also the polemical address to the city, “*A Napoli*”, is enough to conclude that some kind of influence did exist.⁸⁹⁵

A detailed analysis of events, persons, and text is done by Gabrielli (2015), so I will just mention some of them. According to the historical events described or mentioned in her sonnets, madrigals, and in the dedicatory epistle, it is possible to reconstruct estimates of the dates of the poems’ writing, and at the same time it can give us some new insights regarding the historical period Speranza di Bona lived in. For example, the war in Siena occurred in 1553⁸⁹⁶ and it is described in the poetical exchange between Virginia de Salvi and Di Bona. Another historical event present in

⁸⁹³ Gabrielli, 2015, 118: “Ako pritom napomenemo da Laura Terracina u svojoj književnoj produkciji, a počevši od njezine druge zbirke iz 1549, poseže za strukturom “zborne antologije” te da među njezinim prigodnim lirskim tekstovima nalazimo i pjesme posvećene sestri Dianori, nameće se zaključak da bi djelo napuljske pjesnikinje trebalo shvatiti kao jedan od književnih uzora Speranze di Bona.”

⁸⁹⁴ Mentioned in Gabrielli, 2015, 116: Don Garcia de Toledo (8r-9r), don Ferrante di Gonzaga (23r-24r) and his wife Isabella (51v-52v).

⁸⁹⁵ See Gabrielli, 2015, 112.

⁸⁹⁶ Di Bona, 29r-30v.

this song book is the death of Carlo V. This event is mentioned in the poetical reply by Di Bona to De Salvi's poem.⁸⁹⁷ Di Bona, in her poem dedicated to Pellenegra,⁸⁹⁸ mentions his work *Infortunio*, published in 1548. Di Bona describes the arrival of Ferrante Gonzaga,⁸⁹⁹ who died in 1557, and the siege of Malta⁹⁰⁰ that occurred in 1565 appears as the main topic in her sonnet dedicated to the Virgin. On the other hand, there are many persons,⁹⁰¹ some of them only as her contemporaries, and others with whom Speranza di Bona exchanged verses.⁹⁰² Apart from Virginia de Salvi, there are three more names mentioned in the dedicatory text. The first is of course the dedicatee, Michele Luccari, then Gioanbattista Pagano, who is also the addressee of some of Di Bona's poems, and also is signatory to one poem. A reconstruction of his life would probably give some new insights into the Di Bona family's affairs. He is represented as an "honourable and virtuous nobleman".⁹⁰³ The third person is M. Gioanni, to whom Speranza di Bona sent letters on her father's behalf.

In the dedicatory epistle several places are mentioned: Manfredonia, Apricena, Ragusa, and Barletta. The Di Bona family lived in Manfredonia, Ragusa is mentioned as their second homeland, and Barletta as the important place through which all the correspondence between Ragusa and Italy was conducted. The importance of the

⁸⁹⁷ Di Bona, 30r-30v.

⁸⁹⁸ Iacopo Filippo Pellenegra was a doctor, scientist, and poet. He lived between Puglia and Veneto in the sixteenth century. He wrote *Infortunio del Pellenegra da Troia. Nuovamente stampato con alcuni sonetti di varii autori*, Venezia, 1548. At the end of his life he lived in Manfredonia, and worked as a doctor. Di Bona, 32-33.

⁸⁹⁹ Di Bona, 34v-35r.

⁹⁰⁰ Di Bona, 46v-47r.

⁹⁰¹ See Gabrielli, 2015, 89: She provides a list of all historical events and all persons mentioned in the book. She identifies many of them, but there are many still unidentified. To identify them would be a great challenge in the reconstruction of Speranza di Bona's life and work, as well as an important contribution to the cultural history of early modern Ragusa and Manfredonia.

⁹⁰² Here I will just list names of people she exchanges her verses with: Virginia Salvi, Giulia Bona, Iacopo Filippo Pellenegra, Nicolo Sfondratti, an as yet unidentified doctor, Innocentio Scinorelli, Gioantomaso Lupo da Bagnuolo, Cornelia Carrafa Fisico M. Geronimo Cambifes, Catarina Villella d'Aldana, Il Gongora, Prospero Reno Nocerino, and Ganattasio.

⁹⁰³ Di Bona, 17r: "gentilhuomo honorato et virtuoso".

Ragusan consulate in Barletta is emphasized by Gabrielli.⁹⁰⁴ Mentioning Barletta, Speranza di Bona accused people from the consulate of always opening the letters which they sent to their friends or received from them. This is important evidence of the ‘censorship’ practice between the two shores of the Adriatic.

4.6 Three letters and Signor Gioanbattista Pagano

Apart from the poetical part of the book, there appear three letters,⁹⁰⁵ but the most important is the first one, written by Speranza di Bona and addressed to the judge Signor Gioanbattista Pagano, who is also mentioned in the dedicatory epistle – to him, in fact, she dedicates five sonnets and one madrigal. He wrote two letters to her and one sonnet.⁹⁰⁶ In the dedicatory epistle he appears as a judge who had spent some short time in Manfredonia and was a family friend, and who never believed that all the country was against the Di Bona family.⁹⁰⁷ In this letter to him signed by Speranza, but without date and place, she ironically refers to the homeland, and complains about the bad attitude of the homeland toward her. She writes that she sends him her sonnets in answer to Virginia de Salvi, and together with verses written by the physician Scinorelli, pointing out that as he knows how to judge other people’s work, she sends them to him “in subject of our principles”⁹⁰⁸ to judge her writings, but also to judge the difference between foreign and citizen souls. This letter, as well as the very frequent reference to the foreigners in the dedicatory epistle, can open a new path for investigation, towards the position of foreigners in Manfredonia. Although Ragusa had

⁹⁰⁴ Gabrielli, 2015, 177.

⁹⁰⁵ Di Bona, 62v-64r.

⁹⁰⁶ Di Bona, 56r-56v: “Al signor giudice Gioambattista Pagano”; “Al medesimo”; “Al signor Giovanbattista Pagano” (57v-58r); “Al signor Giovambattista Pagano” (60v-60r). After the letters, there is Pagano’s sonnet dedicated to Speranza, followed by Speranza di Bona’s answer (64r-64v).

⁹⁰⁷ Di Bona, 17r.

⁹⁰⁸ Di Bona, 62v: “in soggetto de principi nostri”.

a very good relationship with the Kingdom of Naples, it should be said that the control of foreigners was very strict. If there is a difference between Scinorelli (citizen) and Speranza (foreigner), it might be important to analyse the prescriptions regarding strangers in the Kingdom of Naples.⁹⁰⁹ The other two letters, by Gioantomaso lupu da Bagnuolo, mainly present hyperbolic praise of Speranza Vittoria di Bona's name, as well as testimony of possible real letter circulation, as at the very beginning he writes that he is afraid that the brother of the physician from Salerno, Mr Gabrielle Greco, did not bring her his sonnets he sent to her before.

4.7 *Errata corrige*

As already mentioned, the book finishes with the three-page long, handwritten *errata corrige*. The first page is a kind of self-narrative, while the last two represent the list of errors corrected by the author. In my opinion the errata sheet is written by the same author, and it could be interpreted as self-narrative within the autobiographical discourse where the author Speranza di Bona not only tries to correct some of the many mistakes in the book, and also one more time to blame the cruel homeland for the presence of these errors, but more importantly once again she represents herself as a capable intellectual subject who knows how to judge. According to Lerer, "the errata sheet stands as the site of humanist erudition and early modern subjectivity. It is the place where the past is publicly brought into line with the present, where errors of all kinds could be confessed and corrected".⁹¹⁰ Once more, Di Bona the narrator gives to her reader testimony on her writing activity. In addition, once more it is mentioned that

⁹⁰⁹ See Paola Avalone, "Il controllo dei forasteiri a Napoli tra XVI e XVIII secolo. Prime note", *Mediterranea, Ricerche storiche*, 2006, pp. 169-178.

⁹¹⁰ Seth Lerer, "Errata: Print, Politics and Poetry in Early Modern England", *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 41-71, here 42.

the wicked people found one more way to ruin the reputation and honour of the Di Bona family. Lerer's observation that the errata sheets "serve to establish authorial authority through the acknowledgement of error. In the process, they refashion the relationship of author to reader along new templates of power",⁹¹¹ is useful in understanding Speranza's di Bona work, and an invitation to the reader to react *pro iudicio*.

The study of the errata sheet and of the rhetoric of error also helps us understand the ways in which the disciplines of the editorial review, legal judgement, political control and religious devotional shared an idiom and imaginary. In an age when the practice of confession came under close scrutiny, errata sheets and their accompanying paratexts became the places where the urge to confess could still find a voice, and where the seeking of forgiveness found its listener not among the booths of the church but in the stalls of the bookseller.⁹¹²

There are two important things which should be emphasized in this short text. First, it testifies to printing circumstances. It is only here that it is stated that the author gave the work to the printers without a title, and consequently they gave the title "as they considered to nominate it".⁹¹³ Although she does not react against that, she needs to point out that she did not choose the name of the work. It might be important to understand the title of this work in its historical dimension, and to understand its key words as provided by the press ("defence, honour, infamy") in line with "nominations".⁹¹⁴ Secondly, like in the dedicatory epistle, Di Bona uses the rhetoric of modesty in explaining her dismay at the presence of many mistakes in her book. She claims that the reason for publishing this book is to explain the truth, and not to show

⁹¹¹ Lerer, 47.

⁹¹² Lerer, 43.

⁹¹³ Di Bona, *errata corrige*: "quei signori nella stampa secondo la considerazione loro l'hanno denominata".

⁹¹⁴ Dunn, 69.

artistic beauty: “it was not the question of giving the art to the world, but rather to clarify the truth”.⁹¹⁵ In some way “among incredible traps of wicked homeland”,⁹¹⁶ still she hopes that there will be somebody who would understand.⁹¹⁷ The privileged reader appears once more as the object of hope.

Speranza di Bona is a writer who in her only work made a picture of herself, using the rhetoric of defence; she presents herself as a woman author. At the same time, she subjugates herself to the authority of God and also to that of male figures. On a more thematic line, apart from the sisterhood, as suggested by Gabrielli, “the topic of the narrator’s friendly and sisterly sympathy”,⁹¹⁸ what makes this book quite unique in its cultural and historical environment is the female reaction against the legal system. From the cover of the book, where the inscription *tolle legem* (“take off law”) is written, the date of which does not have to coincide with the date of publication, until the very last handwritten errata, where once more it is said that the weakened homeland is responsible for the errors in the book, through the main body of the book, dedicatory epistle and sonnets to and from judges (Gianattasio⁹¹⁹ and Giaonbattista Pagano⁹²⁰), and three letters where the ungrateful homeland is mentioned, the theme of reaction to some kind of law and “the voice in achieving public end”⁹²¹ is, I would say, one of the major themes of the work. Speranza’s self-presentation should be looked upon as functioning in two different networks, the family network and the social network. The exclusion from one usually implies stronger ties in the other, in this case the family network. With her published book, Speranza di Bona tried to become visible within both networks.

⁹¹⁵ Di Bona, *errata corrige*: “non è cosa per dar arte al mondo ma solo per chiarire la verità”.

⁹¹⁶ Di Bona, *errata corrige*: “et fra le incredibili insidie de la scelerata Patria”.

⁹¹⁷ Di Bona, *errata corrige*: “a i pochi rari onde potranno sgannarsi molti [...] potranno [...] anarsi”.

⁹¹⁸ Gabrielli, 83.

⁹¹⁹ Di Bona, 53v.

⁹²⁰ Di Bona, 56r-56v; 57v-58r; 60r-60v; 64r-64v

⁹²¹ Dunn, 51.

The word ‘foreigners’ is repeated many times within the text of the dedicatory epistle and in the letter signed by Di Bona, and it might be important to analyse the concept of the foreigner, as Speranza di Bona, although born in Manfredonia, was a foreigner. If there were a foreigner in Manfredonia, according to Di Bona, in search of truth, he would find even monasteries to be silent about this matter.⁹²² The stranger in Reame was similar to the concept of the ‘vagabond’, as suggested by Paola Avallone.⁹²³

Speranza di Bona uses paratextual conventions as a public space in which she can introduce private matters, and in the same manner defend her authorship. In doing so, she decided to reveal the truth to the reader, which is one of the most present topoi within the dedicatory genre. The truth, she says, resides only with the members of her family, and their servant. As time is represented as the father of truth, di Bona presented herself as somebody who will defend the truth no matter what, and time will eventually bring “temporal and spiritual justice”. The privileged reader will understand it, and therefore this matter will become “self-evident to the judicious reader”.⁹²⁴ As such, the authority of printed words becomes the most important, and the figure of the reader who will judge (*ad iudicium personae*) highly important.

Speranza di Bona, the author of the book, invoking the importance of justice and reacting against the injustice, also shows the reader that she participates in culture, which was dominated by men’s participation. This is reinforced by the vast verse exchange with influential men. In the words of Jones:

their situation as women required them to establish visible bonds to male celebrities, to personalize their intertextual relationships by naming their

⁹²² Di Bona, 20r: “in Manfredonia, ove albergara un forastiero, che egli per tutto non trovi inganni forse nei monasteri trovera bene in questa causa il silenzio della verità”.

⁹²³ See: Paola Avallone, “Il controllo dei “forestieri” a Napoli tra XVI e XVIII secolo. Prime note”, *Mediterranea, Ricerche storiche*, 2006, pp. 169-178.

⁹²⁴ Dunn, 72.

colleagues in poetry. Circumscribed by the social and literary primacy of men, they manipulated male-authored texts and reputation in order to claim fame for themselves.⁹²⁵

The multiplicity of Speranza di Bona's interlocutors could also give us certain insights into her literary activity. Firstly, she shows herself to be a respected writer. She praises persons who praised her. The dialogic scheme is *proposta/risposta*, where "the juxtaposition of the two texts confirms that each provides a springboard for the other's virtuosity".⁹²⁶ Moreover, the length of the dedicatory epistle, which is much longer than the usual one, at 22 pages, confirms that there is, in the words of Wittreich, "particular stress upon ethical proof".⁹²⁷ However, the length of the dedicatory epistle can also be connected to the fact that, as Di Bona explains herself, it was originally meant to be sent as a letter, and as the letter never reached its addressee, she decided to publish it in a shorter version. This claim highlights the importance of the circulation of manuscripts, and also the impossibility of equating today's position of the dedicatory epistle with the one during the early modern period, which obviously was added later to the work.

Also, as found important by previous scholarship by Maroević and Gabrielli, it is important to highlight the concept of transgression for women within the norms of the patriarchal society of Manfredonia, and in general that of the Kingdom of Naples. This transgression is connected with honour and infamy, two key words which the printing press chose for the title. If we follow the observation made by Eckerle, I would suggest that Speranza di Bona manipulated the rhetorical and paratextual strategies within the book in order to find a space for her own needs.

⁹²⁵ Jones, 82.

⁹²⁶ Jones, 109.

⁹²⁷ Dunn, 54: these are words by Joseph Anthony Wittreich on Milton, quoted by Dunn.

CONCLUSION: PARATEXT AND EVENT, GENDER AND AUTHORSHIP

I hope that this study, based on individual texts and paratexts (and the textual and rhetorical choices of their authors), and a particular historical moment in the Italian and

Ragusan context in the second half of the sixteenth century, has shown the importance of contextualisation, recovery, reconstruction, analysis, and representation of female-authored works during the early modern period. The detailed analysis of the life and work of Maria Gondola, as well as the translation of the dedicatory epistle signed by her, is presented as novel work for this dissertation. In addition, this is the first comprehensive analysis of the work of Ragusan women writers in the context of Italian literature, and the first recognition of the importance of paratext. Finally, the introduction of the third case study proved to be very useful in order to understand the cultural similarities and diversity between the two shores and the impact that this had on female cultural production.

However, any kind of generalization should be avoided, as it is impossible to come to universal conclusions about women's literary expression and the very important concept of authorship within paratext and the rhetoric of defence during the sixteenth century. I do believe that it can provide us with certain insights on how their writings reflected larger tendencies in textual and literary culture in Italian in the early modern period, and as is suggested by micro-history, it opens paths to generate questions in a different way, to question existing generalisations and hopefully to offer new data, through work on the primary sources and archival research, applying, in Nietzsche's words, "the art of slow reading", as suggested by Carlo Ginzburg in his latest interview in the Argentinian journal *Clarín*.⁹²⁸

The dedicatory epistles are only partly considered as self-narratives. Previous readings of their work, which mainly related the text to the author's biography, is questioned. They wrote in a particular historical moment of flourishing women's writing, and the post-Tridentine atmosphere, geographically positioned on the two

⁹²⁸ www.versobooks.com/blogs/3013-carlo-ginzburg-and-the-trails-of-microhistory. Accessed on 7th January 2017.

shores of the Adriatic, in Italian. All three texts and all three authors are inserted in the network of power, and they speak from a certain position. The relational networks in the three cases are different: family, friends, patrons, but there is one similarity: the power relationships within their society are the same. God is taken as the final authority, published books become means of “correcting injustice”, and family was a space which provided them a secure base and the financial support necessary to publish their work.

The silence which for centuries was imposed on women was in an important way broken by publishing a book. The strategies used to break that silence are inherited from an already-entrenched literary and cultural model, constructed, of course, by male writers. However, in order to break the silence, these three women writers needed to “manoeuvre within the chastity-silence equation, [and] men’s ownership of education and publishing”,⁹²⁹ and consequently they adopted “a prestigious discourse that legitimates [their] writing”.⁹³⁰ Anne R. Larsen, writing on French early modern women writers and the preface, concludes:

Early women writers exploited the preface’s “marginality” and epistolarity. To legitimize their uncommon venture, they adroitly adapted its apologetic *topoi*; and they heightened its sense of relational “intimacy” by framing it as a letter addressed by one woman to generally another woman friend, mentor, or patron. The preface thus occupies a strategic function in their venue into the world of the printed book in which relatively few had entered.⁹³¹

The choice of the dedicatees in the three cases presented in this thesis confirms Larsen’s statement. Gondola dedicated the book written by her husband to their woman friend,

⁹²⁹ I borrow the idea of maneuvering from Jones, 1999.

⁹³⁰ Jones, 1999, 4.

⁹³¹ Larsen, 11-22.

Fiore Zuzzori, Herculiana to a woman patron, the queen of Poland, while Speranza di Bona dedicated one proemial sonnet to a woman from Ragusa, Maddallena Luccari.

All of them reacted to apparently concrete events. Gondola reacted against the injustice that made her friend Fiore Zuzzori leave Ragusa, Herculiana decided to publish her letters as she came to know that somebody else would have published them, and Speranza di Bona directly reacted against some “old lie” connected with the honour of her family. Gondola and Herculiana subsequently tried to defend or, more precisely, to find a justification for the female sex in general. Speranza di Bona justified herself and her family. In order to do so, they applied different rhetorical strategies, mentioning the catalogue of exemplary women, relying on accepted male authorities, using proverbial sentences, and not infrequently employing etymology (just to mention the most frequently used strategies). In doing so they used the peritextual space (the paratext within the book) as one of the rare public spaces where they could react against injustice, whether it had really happened or was invented, in order to legitimate their authority as writers and to affirm themselves.

They wrote texts which should be understood as “located between experience and discourse”,⁹³² before or at the same time as, for example, Veronica Franco, Moderata Fonte, Veronica Gambara, Tulia d’Aragona, Gaspara Stampa, Laura Teraccina, Tarquinia Molza, and Lucrezia Marinella were proclaiming their ideas in their books. In Veneto, especially in Padua and Treviso, the *querelle des femmes* “had been brewing anew since mid-1580 in the literary academies”.⁹³³

However, although Gondola’s dedicatory epistle was the first and only text contributing to the *querelle des femmes* in Italian from the eastern shore of the Adriatic,

⁹³² Fabian Brandle, “Pitfalls in Reading Popular Self-Narratives. Biographical reconfigurations and self-censure in the autobiography of a peddler, small farmer and weaver from eastern Switzerland, Gregorius Aemisegger (1815-1913)”, Ulbrich, ed., 191.

⁹³³ Cox, 2011.

it used already-known arguments and exempla, and it did not bring anything more to bear than commonplace arguments, which it was also possible to find in other Italian works. In the light of my conclusion that it was mainly rewritten from Camerata's and De Guevara's works, the work's historical subtext, which has emerged so prominently in the analyses offered by previous scholarship, should be reconsidered.

Gender does matter. In fact, it has proved to be the most important factor in conducting such an analysis. However, the concept of class is not analysed here, as women who can publish mainly, and within this thesis exclusively, belonged to the upper, privileged class. If we closely ('slowly') read their texts as well as the reception of these three texts and their authors, the first thing we note is that all of them are represented in relation to a male counterpart: Maria Gondola as the wife of Nicolò di Gozze; Fiore Zuzzori, for centuries considered the first poetess from Dalmatia because Tasso, and then other (male) poets from Ragusa and Italia, dedicated their works to her, or wrote about her; Camilla Herculiana escaped punishment by the Inquisition, because in her defence it was said that words by women cannot be taken seriously, as by their nature women are not capable of rationality. Maria Gondola had an influential husband, and Speranza and Camilla had merchant fathers.⁹³⁴ Their education and potential to appear in print should be connected with the fact that they belonged to the upper class and had the means and time to write and publish.

In their writings gendered language is obvious. They all highlight their belonging to the female sex, writing for example "as a woman with the greatest ingenuity" in the case of Herculiana, or in the very powerful lamentation by Di Bona who believes that there is not "any Woman under the sky in whatever time she lived, [who] had survived such a strange and cruel persecution which is impossible to find

⁹³⁴ Many women authors in the early modern period had merchant fathers, such as Lucrezia Marinella.

between the other barbarous cruelties”, as happened to her. Finally, Gondola insists on the importance of the rhetorical question: “Don’t you now see the excellence of our sex?” Moreover, they adopted the male discourse as embedded mainly in Christian doctrine, Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, Neoplatonism, and Petrarchism.

Apart from gender, genre also matters. “It can be said that genre, because of its intersubjective and social character, behaves as the super I which controls the written behaviour, because it supposes the previously made model of the world”.⁹³⁵ Moreover, as this thesis argues, for the dedicatory epistle as well as letters were an ideal space for self-representation and authorial confirmation, as well as important testimonies of the dominant power and ideology.

Greenblatt’s concept of “self-fashioning” was useful in the analysis of these texts, and the “picture” these women authors tried to construct, as “the power to impose a shape upon oneself is an aspect of the more general power to control identity – that of others at least as often as one’s own.”⁹³⁶ They used the dedicatory epistle and letters as means of self-promotion, exhibiting their education or experience in rhetoric, providing information and entering into discussion with their friends, patrons, or powerful figures.

Over the course of this thesis, I hope to have shown the importance of the authorial claim, and the idea of authorship itself, within the paratext. The marginal space of the peritext and its epistolary genre allowed women authors, for whom already the social and cultural margins were reserved, to enter the main text. In order to do so, they constructed their identities, as authors. This is obvious in the case of Camilla Herculiana, as her profession, *speciala*, appears in the title of her work, and in her letters and the other paratextual elements (especially at the trial) her reference to herself

⁹³⁵ Arriaga Flòrez, 20: “Se puede decir que el género, por su carácter intersubjetivo y social, se comporta como un super yo que controla el comportamiento escrito, porque supone un modelo preconstituido del mundo.”

⁹³⁶ Greenblatt, 1.

as philosopher and more importantly as somebody who has practical experience apart from philosophical knowledge, should be highlighted in the reception of her work. Speranza di Bona opposed herself and her family to the other, “wicked people from her homeland”, presenting herself as respectable, honourable, chaste, and honest. She manipulated the textual space of the dedicatory epistle and *errata corrige* to introduce her personal story, which might be interpreted as a strategy for defending her authorial identity. From the other side, the case of Maria Gondola is different, and multi-layered. In the first place, as my thesis has shown, the fact that almost all her dedicatory epistle was re-written from two works, mainly from the work by her contemporary, Camerata, opened new lines for the analysis of this text, forcing us to focus more on Gondola’s editorial abilities. Secondly, by comparing the text of the dedicatory epistle signed by Gondola with Di Gozze’s book *Dialoghi*, the possibility that the “authorship” of the dedicatory epistle belongs to Di Gozze, who strategically gives the authorship to his wife, as he appears as one of the interlocutors within the book of dialogues, should be pointed out.

Foucault wrote that “all discourses endowed with the author-function contain the plurality of self”.⁹³⁷ But in prefaces, as well as in dedicatory epistles, this always includes the authorial self. Or, in the words of Dunn,

the ‘I’ that speaks the preface of the early modern book is never merely the writerly ‘I’; it is first and foremost the essence of the authorial claim [...] it is always a rhetorical figure, a gesture with a design of its audience, an attempt at self/authorization.⁹³⁸

⁹³⁷ Quoted in Dunn, 11.

⁹³⁸ Dunn, 11.

Prefatory strategies in general, as shown by Dunn, were consistent during the early modern period, and when women's writing is taken into consideration, as pointed out by Eckerle, it would not rarely become a place for defending all women:

most early modern women writers recognized the value of the preface and exploited it for their own benefit, often to make arguments in defense of women that have no place in the primary texts but that, paradoxically, create the space in which those texts can be written.⁹³⁹

In the first chapter, I argued for situating these three women authors in their larger contexts (historical, geo-political, literary (paratextual, epistolary, and secular discursive prose)) as well as the context of the *querelle des femmes*. Following the ideas of New Historicism and micro-history, I have tried to situate women's writing within the broader literary culture, and the culture in general, of which they were a part. In this way, these still marginalised authors and their texts can be seen from the different perspectives, historical, cultural, social, and textual. As suggested by Greenblatt, the relation between the power "dispersed in ideological structures of meaning, typical ways of expression and repeating narrative strategies" and the power located in the "the court, the church, colonial administrative, patriarchal family"⁹⁴⁰ is inseparable. The texts presented in this dissertation are understood partly as cultural artefacts, and culture is understood as a text, as a "manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon these codes."⁹⁴¹ As Foucault has shown, power relations should not be tracked within individual subjects so much as within social relations, suggesting that discourses of power are made possible because of "regularities" – the institutions that

⁹³⁹ Eckerle, 101.

⁹⁴⁰ Greenblatt, 1980, 4.

⁹⁴¹ Greenblat, 4.

govern the production and circulation of statements across discourses, leading to repetitions and commonalities.

It has been shown that the contexts discussed here allowed women to contribute to the *querelle des femmes*, as well as to the domain of natural philosophy, as in case of Camilla Herculiana. Both men and women wrote in defence of women's rights. I have paid special attention to the male voice in defence, for two reasons. The first and most obvious reason was because I have discussed influence in regards to the writing of these three women, which we find comes mainly from male writings, such as Castiglione, Camerata, Piccolomini, or De Guevara. Secondly, the most influential female voices in defence all appeared after the texts analysed in this dissertation were written, therefore they cannot be taken as the most influential works in this regard (here in the first place I refer to the work by Fonte and Marinella).

In line with Cox's conclusion I also believe that the post-Tridentine period was supportive for these voices of defence by both men and women, although it would be impossible to agree with Burckhardt's notions of male and female equality. Although the possibilities for female education in the context of sixteenth century Ragusa and Italy were limited, the appearance of women who published their work and moreover wrote in defence of women's rights should be highlighted. Additionally, the importance of the female voice in defence within the paratextual elements of their work has been neglected and underestimated by previous scholarship. This is not only in the context of the *querelle des femmes*, but in the larger context of cultural production in general.

In Eckerle's words, the claim for authorship within the paratextual elements is obvious:

women writers simply had to explain themselves in order to create an audience receptive to their (that is, *women's*) work. That apology was already written into

– and thus expected of – the genre of the preface proved especially useful for these women.⁹⁴²

The concept of authorship in all three case studies became the most important one. As already highlighted, the authorship of Maria Gondola should be questioned and reconsidered, taking into account different practices. In the first place, we need to acknowledge the fact that almost all her dedicatory epistle was rewritten from two works, mainly from a work by her contemporary, Camerata. This fact opened new lines for the analysis of this text, such as a focus on Gondola's editorial abilities, and to consider her dedicatory epistle as one penned by an editor, rather than by an author, and to suggest that the apparently private tone of this dedicatory epistle, and the use of this dedicatory epistle as historical and bibliographical source, should be reconsidered.

Secondly, by comparing the text of the dedicatory epistle signed by Gondola with Di Gozze's *Dialoghi*, the possibility emerges that the "authorship" of the dedicatory epistle belongs to Di Gozze, who strategically gives the authorship to his wife, as he appears as one of the interlocutors within the dialogues. Here, the conclusion drawn by Dunn might prove useful, who reverses Foucault's definition of the author. According to Dunn glossing Foucault, "it is when the subversive discourse finds itself on the brink of empowerment, of articulating something more than a negative critique of the reigning orthodoxies, that the authority of the author becomes necessary".⁹⁴³

The second key study, Camilla Herculiana and her work, covered in the third chapter, was meant to connect the two other women authors, as Herculiana is the only one connected with the Italian peninsula. The paratextual analysis showed some similar authorising strategies as those we can see in the other two, and the gender system as represented in her work provided certain insights into gendered power relations. Every

⁹⁴² Eckerle, 100.

⁹⁴³ Dunn, 10.

letter signed by Herculiana finishes with her writing about herself, and in a way, she self-preserved. She insisted on presenting herself as a *speciala* and philosopher; she also refers to her traditionally assigned gender roles (wife and mother), but in a more disparaging way. Paradoxically, in her paratext she defends women, but later at her Inquisitional trial she was defended by reference to the weakness of her sex and gender.

The third case study, Speranza di Bona, tried to justify her family and herself, but also to justify the publication of the book and her (and her sister's) writing activity. This dedicatory epistle serves as a mediation between the author and the public and has an introductory or prefatory function. In some passages, this dedicatory epistle gives the explanation and sometimes "the excuse" for the publishing of this miscellaneous collection. The author, Speranza di Bona, anchored in certain social and cultural systems, used the dedicatory genre, codified by certain norms, in a specific historical moment, to speak about herself and to react against certain norms. That is to say, the author used the genre of the dedicatory epistle as a medium through which to respond to individual and personal matters, and also as a medium through which the reader can see how she perceived reality. The case of Di Bona is moreover particular, because until now no archival data on her has been traced, therefore all analysis is based on her only work.

All three women presented here published one work, although in the case of Gondola her text appeared in a book by her husband. Their work has until recently been forgotten. But, it appears that time, "the author of all authors, and therefore of all authority",⁹⁴⁴ although after more than half a millennium, will reveal them; in the words of Speranza di Bona, "time is the father of truth: if there is something impossible to know today, maybe tomorrow it will be possible to learn [it]". Their work has recently

⁹⁴⁴ Bacon, 1966.

attracted considerable attention. The forthcoming edition of the *Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* will for the first time publish their writings with complete or partial translations into English. These voices, excluded from the centre, as opposed to the “first voice” – the voice of male canonical writers⁹⁴⁵ – “presented an audible counterargument to centuries of biblical and Aristotelian anti woman sentiment and to the patriarchal structure of Western Society, a structure legitimized by the texts of these traditions”.⁹⁴⁶

Epilogue

At the end, I would like once again to address the question of why such research is important today. One of the main aims of the TEEME programme is “to integrate the study of the past with impact on the present”, and we, researchers, should do just this:

bring this period into meaningful relations with current issues and concerns by focusing on the enduring traces that early modern texts and events left, and still

⁹⁴⁵ Here I refer to *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, which has already been mentioned, and the series of more than one hundred titles; see www.othervoiceineme.com.

⁹⁴⁶ Ross, 2009, 5.

leave, on today's globalized world. History, literature and culture will thus be taught and studied as central to the shaping of the future.⁹⁴⁷

For the occasion of the 'women of the year award' in December 2016, the American pop star Madonna delivered a speech which became highly popular, quoted and shared on social networks by both men and women. Among other things, Madonna said:

What I would like to say to all women here today is this: Women have been so oppressed for so long they believe what men have to say about them [...] As women, we have to start appreciating our own worth and each other's worth. Seek out strong women to befriend, to align yourself with, to learn from, to collaborate with, to be inspired by, to support, and be enlightened by[.]⁹⁴⁸

In 1584, 432 years before Madonna's speech, in writings by Camilla Herculiana and Maria Gondola, we find almost the same words. As written by Gondola-Camerata, "I believe, women should have some recommended eulogy in order to shut the mouths of those their detractors, and open their eyes to reason [...] and they would have realized that our sex is perfect, and also the sex of their species is perfect".

Appendix 1: Transcription of the dedicatory epistle written by Maria Gondola

With reference to the parts which are cut from the 1585 edition, as well as the parts which are rewritten from:

- Antonio de Guevara, *Libro di Marco Aurelio con l'horologio de principi*, Venetia, Francesco Portonaris, 1568, Libro secondo, "Come le donne potrebbero essere non manco savi e che gli huomini", Cap. XXXIII
- **Girolamo Camerata, *Trattato dell'honor vero, et del vero dishonore. Con tre questioni qual meriti piu honore, o' la donna, o' l'huomo. O' il soldato, o' il***

⁹⁴⁷ From the TEEME web site: www.teemeurope.eu/teeme-objectives/index.html. Accessed on 5th January 2017.

⁹⁴⁸ Madonna, 13 December 2016. Available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6Xgbh2E0NM. Accessed on 5th January 2017.

letterato. O' l'artista, o' il leggista di Girolamo Camerata, Bologna, Benacci, Alessandro, 1567.

- *Censored or cut parts of the dedicatory epistle are written in italic.*

Alla non men bella che virtuosa, e gentil donna, Fiore Zuzzori, in Ragugia.

Havendomi il mio marito presentato questi giorni passati li presenti discorsi sopra la Metheora d'Aristotile, i quali fece con il gentilissimo Michiel Mondaldi, non mai a pieno lodato per la saviezza d'animo, e per li suoi gentilissimi costumi, io sempre hò l'animo mio rivolto in V.S. alla quale per molte sue virtù, che'l suo nobilissimo animo, et bellissimo corpo adornato, e per altre infinite, e rare sue qualità gli sono già piu tempo divenuta affettionatissima, deliberai per mostrarne qualche segno di questa mia interna , e continua affettione, non a lei, essendo ella chiara, ma al mondo, di farle presente di questi discorsi, che a me dal mio marito sono stati presentati, i quali prendono grandissimo ardire di comparire tra gli huomini sotto la scorta dell'honorato suo nome, essendo cosa chiara, che la sua bellezza, la qual⁹⁴⁹ è maravigliosa a chiunque la vede, rappresenti quella bellezza dell'animo suo, la quale via piu maggiore in una donna bella desiderar non si puote; laqual bellezza di corpo, e perfettion d'animo, innanzi che da gli huomini si potesse conoscere, mentre fù sotto i primi giorni del suo nascimento quasi tutta soggetta alla deformità e confusione della prima materia, il suo chiaro nome è stato buonissimo testimonio, quasi fatale, che sia rinchiuso in lume et splendore delle virtù divine sotto il suo leggiadretto manto, lequali poi nell'acrescimento suo manifestamente si sono vedute, di continuo si veggono insieme con la bellezza del corpo (vera imagine, et testimonio della bellezza dell'animo nostro) maravigliosamente con l'ampiezza del loro splendore risplendere; la onde io tengo una ferma opinione, anzi speranza, che'l nome suo cosi degno et riguardevole debba esser una sicurissima difesa contra i fieri colpi de gl'invidiosi, e di coloro, i quali per lor propria, e natural malignità sono sempre pronti a morder, e lacerar l'altrui cose, *da i quai morsi ella piu che nessun'altra donna è stata toccata nella mia patria; di che ne sono state cagione le sue rare qualità, anzi mai prima viste in altra donna del secol nostro, la quale con la bellezza del corpo, e virtù d'animo hà accresciuto la pena a i maligni, si come sempre sogliono le cose piu eccellenti esser'accrescimento di pena a quelli, che colmi di malignità et invidia rifuggendo, che la loro mal saldata piaga non*

⁹⁴⁹ In the second edition, 'la qual' is written together: 'laquale'.

sia inacerbita dal dolore, miseri sfogano con parole scempie la molestia della lor trista passione; ma solo mi doglio, che voi non potendo sofferire, che a questi tali lo splendore delle vostre virtù abbagli gli occhi deboli loro, et il dolce aspetto vostro non gli sia piu amaro, vi disporrete con lume vostro illuminar gli altrui occhi piu sani, e piu saldi, e rischiarar mal grado nostro l'ombrese, e piacevoli selve d'Italia, e farli sentire i soavi e dolci accenti delle vostre parole, et indolcir con l'aspetto vostro quelli, che dalla malignità del fiele amaro non sono soprapersi, lasciando (ahi fato crudele, ahi Ciel crudo e superbo) questi nostri occhi privi del suo Sole, e questi luoghi nostri oscuri e foschi risonare de gli horrendi suoni di Lupi, Orsi, e Tigri, il qual suo dipartire quando io tal'hora vò pensando, sento cagionarmi una certa tristezza di mente incurabile, con una compassione grandissima di mè stessa; tal che io maledico l'hora et il punto nel quale mai la vidi et conobbi le sue virtù al mondo rarissime: poscia che nel principio mi furono liete e gioconde, e nel fine potriano esseremi con l'absenza sua triste et amare; hora, poi che così potria volere il mio crudel destino, e quella fetida e maligna Arpia piu ingorda di Satanasso, e piu infame di Cacco, più perfido d'un'hebreo gran nemico della nostra nobiltà, ma sì ben per timor occulto, à cui sol di lode tra le sue virtù heroiche, gli si può dare esser degno ceppo della sua bella prole, al quale piu piace la bilancia, che la statiera; prego Iddio, dopo che in questo mondo riveder piu non si speriamo, ci congiunga almeno ove si calcano i falsi pensieri de gli empìi, tristi e maligni, et il vero si gode con piu chiari spiriti, non con le genti strane, inique, et inessorabili; ove piu non si sentono i morsi de i velenosi serpi, ne piu si odono le terribil voci dell'horrende fiere, ma di dolcezza e soavità si pasce il cuore, et l'anima, udendosi i soavi suoni di nuovi et inusitati accenti; ma per tornar ove mi lasciai, a lei indirizzo questa fatica del mio marito, acciò ch'ella sia saldo scudo contra quelli, che sono pronti per loro natural malignità morder et lacerare le più belle e virtuose cose, essendo lei fra le bellissime virtuosissima et fra le virtuosissime bellissima; et venga che molti potriano maravigliarsi della cagione, che mi mosse di far uscire questi presenti discorsi sotto la protettione, ò difesa del sesso femminile, credendosi eglino forse, che sì come noi per natura non siamo habili all'essercito dell'armi, così ancora naturalmente siamo prive della capacità delle scienze, e cognitione delle cose, et che allontanate siamo da costumi delle virtù morali, la qual opinione ne gli huomini credo non sia proceduta d'altronde, se non vinti da gli affetti loro, i quali spesso fanno giudicare ne i proprii particolari molto diversamente da quel vero ch'essi giudicano et affermano, che noi al lor rispetto siamo d'imperfettissimo

sesso, e perciò mostrano **molte autorità de scrittori troppo lontane dalla verità, et troppo parziali à loro stessi:**⁹⁵⁰ ma quando volessero deporre da parte l'interesse proprio, e giudicar con ragione, trovariano, **che il nostro sesso è perfetto, et perfetto ancor quello de gli huomini nella lor specie, tanto che non si può dir assolutamente, ch'uno sia più degno dell'altro; ben che quando ciò si potesse dire, crederei, che le donne dovessero havere qualche più segnalata lode per chiuder la bocca à i detrattori loro, et aprirgli gli occhi della ragione;**⁹⁵¹ perché è chiaro inditio la beltà del corpo di quella beltà dell'animo; Platone nel suo Fedro lo mostra **chairamente:**⁹⁵² il che ancora facilmente si persuade con ragione, **perche nella ben disposta materia, la forma fa meglio le sue operationi: la bellezza del corpo (il qual'è vera materia dell'anima nostra) essendo un'effetto della proportion de gli humori, et della loro regolata virtù formatrice si può sicuramente dire, che l'anima in un corpo cosi ben disposto sia piu virtuosa nelle sue operationi; onde chiaramente si conosce, che la beltà del corpo sia segno di quella dell'animo; e non è dubbio, che la bellezza del corpo è maggiore nel sesso nostro, che in quello de gli huomini; dunque sarà maggior ancor quella dell'animo loro,**⁹⁵³ et quantunque gli huomini questo volessero negare, che la bellezza nostra sopravanzasse quella del corpo loro, l'occhio istesso afferma, e mostra il contrario, sendo noi prive di quei peli, che fanno loro parer selvaggi, e dipinti dalla natura d'un colore bianco et rosso.⁹⁵⁴ Oltre di ciò, se le donne per lo più sono da gli huomini amate, non saranno elle piu de gli huomini perfette? La nobiltà della causa finale via piu nobile⁹⁵⁵ dell'altre cause ci si mostrò chiaramente. Il nome ancor della donna, il quale non significa altro **ch'una signora, e non di se stessa, perché sarebbe Signora di nulla;**⁹⁵⁶ et l'huomo in questo modo meglio si potrebbe dir signore, che la donna, nè meno si può dir signora delle cose del mondo, perche non meno è l'huomo, che la donna superiore à quelle; dunque domandandosi la donna signora, bisogna ciò intendere rispetto all'huomo, il qual nome non senza cagione da gli Italiani è stato imposto, come da gli intelletti

⁹⁵⁰ Camerata, 2r.

⁹⁵¹ Camerata, 2v.

⁹⁵² Camerata, 7r, ragion quinta.

⁹⁵³ Camerata, 7r.

⁹⁵⁴ Camerata, 7r-7v. Here it is important to mention that Gondola changes these words, as Camerata wrote that women are red and white in colour, not men.

⁹⁵⁵ Camerata, 7v-8r, ragion sesta.

⁹⁵⁶ Camerata, 5v, ragion terza.

svegliati, et eccellenti, et come da **i giuditiosi impositori.**⁹⁵⁷ Di più è cosa chiara, che il sesso nostro sia più disposto della mente a ricever le forme intelligibili, che non sono gli huomini, per esser la complessione delle donne più molle; il che il senso istesso lo manifesta, essendo di temperamento humido; **onde disse Aristotele, che quelli, i quali sono di carne molle, sono più atti di mente, percioche l'anima opera secondo l'instrumento di corpo, la complessione del quale quando è molle, cioè humida e calda, ò humida e fredda, è piu atta à ricevere, che non saria quando fosse di complessione secca calda; o secca e fredda, come quella de gli huomini: da questa dispositione dunque si conchiude che le donne sono più perfette de gli huomini;**⁹⁵⁸ et la verità di questa opinione, molti essempii delle antiche donne ci affermano, che sono state savie, cosi in Roma, come in Grecia, si legge che Aristippo, il qual'era discepolo di Socrate, et uno di più eccellenti Filosofi d'Athene, costui hebbe una figliuola chiamata Arethea,⁹⁵⁹ la quale fu tanto dotta nelle lettere Greche, et Latine, ch'era fama in tutta la Grecia esser passata l'anima di Socrate in quella, et la causa di questo era, perche leggeva, e dichiarava la dottrina di Socrate, nel mondo, che pareva piu tosto haverla essa scritta, che imparata: questa donna lesse pubblicamente la Filosofia naturale, et morale nelle Academie d'Athene trentacinque anni, scrisse quaranta libri tra i quali specialmente uno delle laudi di Socrate, l'altro del modo di nutrire i fanciulli, uno delle battaglie d'Athene, uno della Republica di Socrate, uno della infelicità delle donne, l'altro dell'agricoltura de gli antichi, uno della provvidenza delle formiche, l'altro dell'artificio delle api; l'uno della vanità de' gioveni, l'altro della calamità de' vecchi; con molti atri libri; i quali racconta il Boccaccio nel secondo libro delle laudi delle donne; Costei hebbe cento Filosofi per discepoli, et morì d'età di settantasette anni.⁹⁶⁰ E scritto ancora, che quel gran filosofo Pithagora hebbe una sorella non dotta, ma dottissima, e dicono che Pithagora più imparò da lei, che lei da lui, havendo questo suo fratello havuto per discepolo, come si mostra in un'epistola, che da Rodi scrisse a questa sua sorella, la quale leggeva la Filosofia in Samotracia: Pithagora discepolo, e fratello desidera la salute a te Theoclea mia sorella; ho letto il libro della Fortuna et infortunio, che mi hai mandato,⁹⁶¹ etc. Che maestro a questa donna si può dare, havendo

⁹⁵⁷ Camerata, 5v: "nondimeno i giuditiosi impositori cercano di dare un nome conseguente alla natura della cosa".

⁹⁵⁸ Camerata, 10r, ragion Decima, et ultima.

⁹⁵⁹ In De Guevara, Aretha.

⁹⁶⁰ De Guevara, 61v-62r.

⁹⁶¹ De Guevara, 62r.

ella havuto Pithagora per discepolo, non crederò, che altra donna più savia al mondo sia stata mai di costei. Plutarco scrive, che Pithagora hebbe non solo la sorella Theoclea, dalla qual'esso imparò tanta Filosofia, ma ancor hebbe una figliuola, la quale sopravanzò nel sapere la Zia, et s'agguagliò al Padre, et che in Athene più si dilettevano sentir' essa parlare nella sua casa, che sentir Pithagora legger' in Academia; il che io non potrei credere, se questo autor Auttor grave non lo dicesse.⁹⁶² E scritto ancora della moglie di Evandro, che fu dottissima, la quale si chiamava Carmenta; e questo per la grande eloquenza, c'hebbe nel verso, detto in Latino Carmen, nel quale hebbe tanta facilità, quanta gli altri hanno nella prosa.⁹⁶³ Narrano ancor l'istorie, che in Grecia erano due donne dottissime, che si chiamavano Lasterma, et Axiotea, et tra discepoli di Platone molto nominate, l'una delle quali era di tanta profonda memoria, et altra di sì alto intelletto, che molte volte essendo Platone in cattedra, non voleva cominciar a leggere per non esservi presente Lasterma, et Axiotea, profonda memoria, et sottil intelletto.⁹⁶⁴ Strabone narra in quel libro de Situ Orbis, che appresso i lidi era una Regina detta Mirthis, qual'era sì piccola di corpo, che pareva una nana; ma nell'animo, e nel sapere tanto alta, che la chiamavano gigantessa; percioche un'huomo, ch'è piccolo di corpo, et grande d'animo giustamente lo chiamano gigante: questa Regina per esser sopra tutto stata molto dotta nella Filosofia, i Lidi la posero nel computo de i sette Re, quali tra loro erano stati molto gloriosi.⁹⁶⁵ Si legge della sorella del Poeta Cornificio, che si chiamava anche ella Cornificia, la quale nelle lettere Greche et Latine non solamente è stata dotta, ma nel comporre versi, et Epigrammi fu dottissima; e dicono, ch'ella componeva piu, e piu eccellenti versi et Epigrammi alla sprovista, che il suo fratello non faceva con l'haverci pensato; et di questo non è dubbio; perché maggior prestezza ha una penna d'un giudizio vivace, che non ha la lingua d'un'intelletto debole.⁹⁶⁶ Narra il Boccaccio nel libro delle laudi delle donne, che Sila quel grand competitore del Consule Mario hebbe tre figliuole, una delle quali sì chiamò Lelia Sabina, et questa tra l'altre sue sorelle era la manco bella, ma era tra tutte le Romane la piu savia; perche publicamente di Greco in Latino dentro di Roma leggeva in una cattedra, et que aveva non solamente gran gratia nel leggere, ma haveva grande eleganza

⁹⁶² De Guevara, 62r.

⁹⁶³ De Guevara, 63r.

⁹⁶⁴ De Guevara, 61r.

⁹⁶⁵ De Guevara, 64r.

⁹⁶⁶ De Guevara, 64r.

nel scriver'Epistole et orationi.⁹⁶⁷ Dove lascio io Cornelia madre de Gracchi, la quale in Roma era molto conosciuta, ma molto più honorata per le scienze, che leggeva in Roma, che per gli acquisti, che facevano i suoi figliuoli in Africa, la quale una volta fu domandata da un Romano, di che haveva maggior gloria, ò di vedersi maestra di tanti discepoli, ò d'esser madre di tanti figliuoli; rispose Cornelia, più m'apprezzo della scienza che ho imparato, che de i figliuoli che ho partoriti; perche i **figliuoli**⁹⁶⁸ mantengono l'honore in vita, et i discepoli perpetuamente sostentano la fama doppo la morte. Dicono, che i libri che scrisse questa matrona, Cicerone non solamente gli lesse, ma grandemente si prevalse delle sue sentenze.⁹⁶⁹ Hor non vedete l'eccellenza del nostro sesso in queste donne antiche sì Greche, come Romane, per le quali chiaramente ciascuno de nostri detrattori può vedere che noi siamo perfette nelle lettere speculative, e quasi più che gli huomini, se bene per lo più quelli ci avanzano nelle armi; et ne gli altri negotii attivi, non però che questo sopravanzi la nostra perfettione, perche questi esercitii mostrano più tosto la perfettion corporale, che la fortezza dell'animo, la qual fortezza non meno nel sesso nostro si può mostrare, che in quello de gli huomini: [non fu maravigliosa quella fortezza d'animo della vergine Romana chiamata **Chlocia**⁹⁷⁰ in presenza del Re Porsena, quando la sua patria trovandosi in pericolo, non solamente dall'assedio la liberò, ma ancora dalla paura, quale i Romani havevano di tanto Re; del cui valore meravigliatosi Porsena, cortesamente la licentiò, e rimandò a Roma, levandosi dall'assedio. Non fu parimente maravigliosa la fortezza di Porcia figliuola di Catone, et moglie di Bruto, che uccise poi Giulio Cesare? la quale per mostrar'al marito la sua fortezza qual mostrerebbe in caso, che quando quel disegno del suo marito non riuscisse, si ferì con il coltello per mostrargli come facilmente s'ammazzerebbe ogni volta, che quel suo proposito dall'effetto scadesse. Fu degna di memoria ancora quella fortezza di Aretofila Cirenea, la quale liberò la sua patria dal Tiranno Nicocrate, facendolo morire insieme con la Calvia madre del Tiranno; e tosto che vide la patria libera, si ritirò in un Monasterio di Monache. Narra Plutarcho la stupenda fortezza di una donna che si chiamava Camma di Galatia, la quale per vendicar la morte del suo marito ucciso da Signorige gentilhuomo di quella Città, per poterla poi chieder per moglie la qual era bellissima di corpo, e di molte virtù ornata, avelenò se stessa per

⁹⁶⁷ De Guevara, 1568, 61r-61v.

⁹⁶⁸ 'I figli' nella versione del 1585.

⁹⁶⁹ De Guevara, 65v.

⁹⁷⁰ In the version from 1585 her name appears as 'Chelia'.

avelenar lui. Restano nella memoria perpetua le donne di Scithia, chiamate Amazone, le quali tanto nell'armi valsero, che accrebbero maravigliosamente l'imperio loro, signoreggiando con l'armi gran parte dell'Asia.⁹⁷¹ Hor non vedete, che la natura del nostro sesso ancor non ha mancato di farci disposte, non che atte all'armi, come si fece ancor alle lettere, et che la fortezza d'animo s'è mostrata in noi, non meno che ne gli huomini; e molto più noi siamo disposte a questi effetti, che non sono gli huomini, se alla viva ragione creder vogliamo; perch'è cosa chiara, se questa dispositione procedesse dalla essenza dell'anima, non essendo d'una medesima specie con quella de gli huomini, saressimo disposte a tutti quelli effetti, non meno, che sono ancor atti gli huomini; ma perché la diversità di questa dispositione all'arme, et alle lettere procede dalla diversità delle complessioni; **noi havendo una complessione temperata, et in comparatione della nostra, quella de gli huomini si può dir' intemperata, la nostra haverà maggior convenienza a tutte le cose, che non ha la intemperata, si come il mezzo è piu vicino alli due estremi, che non è l'uno all'altro estremo; onde nasce, che noi habbiamo maggior dispositione a quello che sono disposti principalmente gli huomini, che sono l'armi, che non hanno essi huomini a quello che noi principalmente siamo disposte, che sono le lettere:**⁹⁷² et se vogliamo ceder in parte a gli huomini, ch'eglino sono piu audaci, e piu animosi, non però segue ch'essi siano piu perfetti; perche noi siamo piu disposte alle cose più perfette, che sono le discipline eccellenti dell'intelletto, che non sono gli huomini, havendo noi il senso piu perfetto e piu temperato. **Di questo dono, et di questa nostra eccellenza ci hanno mostrato il segno molti spiriti elevati delle donne, come già havete inteso, ma tra tutte l'altre a tempi miei la bellissima et gentilissima Madonna Margherita Menze, la quale largamente mostrò quanto sono le donne più facili all'imparare, e quanto hanno intelletto piu acuto, e piu disposto alle discipline, che non hanno gli huomini,**⁹⁷³

⁹⁷¹ Exempls from this passage do not appear in De Guevara's Italian edition (1568), in the copy I have consulted.

⁹⁷² Camerata, 19v-20r. Here Gondola added two nouns, 'lettere' and 'armi'.

⁹⁷³ Camerata, 17r. This part is interesting because here it can be seen how Gondola used the text by Camerata. It is clear that the text is cut, because there is a dot, and after that the sentence which introduces the fact that she was dead, which was not the case with the woman described by Camerata. Because of this I will transcribe here this passage from Camerata's text, as an example of how Gondola was adapting his text: "Di questo danno segno molti spiriti elevati delle Donne. Ma tra tutti una Gentil Donna, che in questa Citta [probably Bologna], la quale oltre a gli studi della Poesia, ne i quali mostra frutti eletti, et maravigliosi, ha havuto ardire porsi ai piu difficili studi, che siano, cioe alla Filosofia d'Aristotele, della qual dopo la Logica ha piu d'una volta letto, et notato tutto il volume della Filosofia naturale, et della divina, et della attiva, questo ha fatto in cosi poco tempo, che dimostra bene, quanto sono le Donne piu facili ad imparare, et quanto hanno intelletto piu acuto, et disposto alle discipline che non hanno gli huomini".

all'anima della quale piaccia all'altissimo Dio dare nell'altro mondo quella pace, la quale in questo si può dire non haver'havuta. **A questa fine dunque, e per queste cagioni ho voluto** dirizzar à V.S. queste presenti giornate del mio marito, **come a quella che solamente col suo nome acquietarà l'animo de i maligni et invidiosi, essendo in lei tutte quelle piu rare virtù, che possano adornar una donna, et che possano descriver la perfettione del sesso nostro. La V.S. mi farà dunque gratia d'accettarle insieme con l'animo mio prontissimo di servirla, et leggendole, supplire con la bellezza del suo ingegno a quanto il mio marito haverà mancato, che ambidue gli restaremo obligati per infinite volte; e quando conoscerò, che queste sue fatiche gli siano state a grado, cercherò in altro tempo, e con altra occasione di servirla, et far al mondo conoscere meglio di quello che ho fatto fin'hora l'osservanza mia, et gli infiniti meriti di lei, alla quale bacio le mani desiderosissima della sua gratia.**⁹⁷⁴

Di Raugia, alli 15. di Luglio 1582.

Di V. S.

Affettionatissima, et devotiss.

Maria Gondola.

Transcription and editing criteria:

The ampersand symbol (&) has been converted to 'et'.

U and *v* have been distinguished.

I left all capitalisation, punctuation, and accents as they are in the original text.

⁹⁷⁴ Camerata, 2v-3r.

Appendix 2: English translation of the dedicatory epistle

To a woman no less beautiful than she is virtuous and gentle, Fiore Zuzzori, in Ragusa.

Being introduced by my husband to the discourses, on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, which he conducted in these days with the very gentle Michele Monaldi, never praised enough for the wisdom of his soul, nor for his very gentle customs, I have always been in my soul close to Your Ladyship, to whom because of your many virtues, your very gentle soul, your beautiful and adorned body, and because of many other infinite, rare qualities to which I had become very attached long ago, I decided to show a few signs of this, my inner and continuous attachment, to show it not to you, as you already know it, but to the world, to introduce these discourses, to which I was introduced by my husband, that courageously appear among men escorted by your honourable name, whereas it is obvious, that your beauty, which appears magnificent to whoever sees it, represents that beauty of your soul, something more than this in a beautiful woman is impossible to desire; whose beauty of body, and perfection of soul, as it is possible to learn, while it was in first days of its birth, almost all subjected to the deformity and confusion of the first matter, your illustrious name was the perfect witness, almost fatal, that it was locked in the light and splendour of the divine virtues of your graceful mantle, virtues which later were manifestly seen, and continue to be seen, together with the beauty of the body (a real picture, the witness of our souls' beauty), marvellously, with the largeness of its splendiferous shining; whereas I have a resolute opinion, or rather hope, that your name, so worthy and respectable, should be the most secure defence against impudent strokes by the envious and those who, because of their own and natural malignity are always ready to bite and rip apart other people's things, *by whose bites you more than any other women in my homeland were touched; the reason lies in your rare qualities, never seen in an another woman of our century, who together with the beauty of your body, and virtues of soul made evil people suffer, as it always happens that excellent things foment rancour in those who are full of evilness and envy, in order not to worsen their open wound, they pour out miserably with their foolish words the*

teasing of their sad passion, but I only do regret, as you could not stand, that the splendour of your virtues blinded their weak eyes, and your sweet appearance became to them more bitter, you will illuminate with your splendour the other eyes, healthier, and steadier, and you will, despite us, make brighter those shady and pleasant Italian woods, and they will hear the pleasing and sweet accent of your words, and you will make sweeter, with your appearance, those who are not overwhelmed by the mischievousness of bitterness, leaving these our eyes apart from Sun (Ah cruel destiny, ah Cruel and superb Heavens) and leaving these our places dark and somber to resound with horrible sounds of Wolves, Bears and Tigers, and now and then when I am thinking about your departure, I feel such a sadness in my mind which is impossible to cure, together with enormous compassion for myself; that I curse the hour and the place when I saw and met you, on the earth, with such rare virtues; given that at the beginning they were joyful and cheerful to me, and at the end they became with your absence sad and painful to me; now, as it was the will of my cruel destiny, and that foetid and vicious Harpy, greedier than the Devil, and more infamous than Cacus,⁹⁷⁵ more perfidious than a Jew – the main enemy of our nobility, but also the occluded respect for one who has among his heroic virtues a respectable example to his offspring, to whom the scales of justice are dearer than money, I pray God, as in this world there is no hope that we see each other, to connect us, at least where false, blasphemous, sad, and malicious thoughts are a hindrance, and where the truth is relished with more illustrious souls, not with hopeless, unjust and cruel people; where no more is it possible to feel the bites of the poisonous snakes, nor is it possible to hear the terrible voices of these horrendous wild beasts, but where the heart is satisfied by sweetness and softness, and the soul, by hearing the pleasing sounds of new and unusual accents, but to get back to where I was, I address this effort of my husband to you, to become the firm shield against those, who are ready because of their natural spitefulness to bite and rip apart the most beautiful and virtuous things, as you stand as the most virtuous amongst the beautiful, and the most beautiful amongst the virtuous; and many will wonder what the reason was which made me to pull out these present discourses on the protection, or defence of the female sex, considering maybe that, as we are not because of our nature capable of wielding weapons, in the same manner we also lack knowledge of the sciences, and awareness about things in general, and that we

⁹⁷⁵ In Roman mythology, Cacus was a fire-breathing giant and the son of Vulcan. He was killed by Hercules after terrorizing the Palatine Hill before the founding of Rome.

are far away from the customs of moral virtues, a thought which did not reach men from anywhere else than from their affections, and they often make judgements from their own particularities, so different from that truth which they judge and assert, that we are, if compared with them, an imperfect sex, and because of that they invoke many authorities of writers which are far away from the truth, and too incomplete; but if they had wanted to leave apart their own interest, and to make conclusions reasonably, they would have realized that our sex is perfect, and also the sex of their species is perfect, so it is not possible to say in an absolute way, than one is worthier than the other; though when it is possible to hear such things, then, I believe, women should have some recommended eulogy in order to shut the mouth of those who are their detractors, and open their eyes to reason; because the clear evidence of the beauty of the soul is the beauty of the body; Plato in his *Phaedrus* shows this very clearly: which is easily persuaded through reason, because in well formed matter, the form performs better its operations: the beauty of the body (which is the real matter of our soul) being an effect of the proportion of the bodily humours, and of their regulation in forming virtue, it is surely possible to say, that the soul in a well formed body is more virtuous in its operations; where it is clearly known, that the beauty of the body is the sign of the beauty of the soul; and with no doubt, the body of our sex is more beautiful than the one of the male sex; therefore this beauty will augment the beauty of our⁹⁷⁶ souls; and if men would like to deny it, that our beauty overcomes that of their bodies, the single eye affirms, and shows the opposite, as we are the ones lacking in hair, which makes them appear wild, and painted by nature in white and red colours. Apart from that, if women are mostly by men loved, are not they more perfect than men? That the nobility of the final cause is more noble than the other causes, it has obviously been shown. Moreover, the name of Woman, which does not mean anything else than Lady, (*signora*, “the one who lords”), and not over herself, because she would be the Lady of nothing; and the man in this manner should be better called master because the woman cannot be denominated the Lady of the word’s things, because neither women nor men are superior to these; therefore, if we call woman Lady it is always understood with regards to man, whose name not without reason was imposed by Italian – the awakened

⁹⁷⁶ The original has ‘loro’, which means ‘theirs’, as probably Gondola in this case overlooked this change in gender in the text by Camerata.

intellects, and excellent and judicious imposers.⁹⁷⁷ Moreover it is clear, that our sex is more mentally capable of grasping the forms of intelligence, which the male cannot do, because the female constitution is more tender, which is also proved by the common sense, as they have a humid temper; where Aristotle said, that those who are made of tender flesh, are more inclined to mental work, because the soul operates upon the corporeal instrument, the constitution when tender, that is to say humid and hot, or humid and cold, is more apt to receive that which is not possible when the constitution is dry and hot, or dry and cold, as it is in the male sex: from this apparatus, therefore, it is concluded that women are more perfect than men; and the truthfulness of this consideration is confirmed by many ancient women, who were wise, both in Rome and in Greece. We can read that Aristippus,⁹⁷⁸ who was Socrates' disciple, and one of the excellent philosophers of Athens, had a daughter named Arete,⁹⁷⁹ who was so learned in Greek and Latin letters, that in all Greece it was thought that Socrates' soul had passed to her, and the reason for this was her reading and explaining Socrates' doctrine to people, so that it seemed as though it were being written by her, and not learned: this woman read in public the natural and moral philosophy, in Academies of Athens for thirty five years, she wrote forty books, among which is one that praises Socrates, another on how to feed children, one on Athens' battles, one on Socrates' republic, one on the unhappiness of women, another on the artifice of bees, another on the agriculture of the ancients, one on the providence of ants, yet another one on bees, one on vanity among youth, another on the calamity among the elderly; with many other books; narrated by Boccaccio in his second book in praise of women; she had a hundred philosophers as disciples, and she died at the age of seventy-five. It is also written that the great philosopher Pythagoras had a sister, not only learned but erudite, and it is said that Pythagoras learned more from her, than she from him, as he was her disciple, as it is possible to see in an Epistle that he sent from Rhodes to his sister, who at the time was reading philosophy in Samothrace: Pythagoras – a disciple, and brother wishes good health to you Theoclea,⁹⁸⁰ my sister; I have read the book on Fortune and Misfortune, you sent to me etc., in which the title of maestro is assigned to this woman,

⁹⁷⁷ This passage is making an etymological argument related to the nouns '*donna*' and '*signora*'. The noun *signora* is translated as "Lady" and *donna* as "woman". See chapter 2 of this thesis for a more detailed discussion.

⁹⁷⁸ Aristippus of Cyrene, a founder of the Cyrenaic school (c. 435–c.356 B.C.).

⁹⁷⁹ Arete of Cyrene (fourth century B.C.), a philosopher; she was the daughter of Aristippus of Cyrene.

⁹⁸⁰ Themistoclea or Theoclea lived in the sixth century B.C., and was a priestess at Delphi.

since she had Pythagoras as her disciple, I do not believe that there had existed a woman wiser than she. Plutarch writes that Pythagoras had not only his sister Theoclea, from whom he learned so much philosophy, but also a daughter, who overtook her aunt, and became equal to her Father, and that in Athens people were more pleased to listen to her at her home than to listen to Pythagoras reading at the Academy: a fact I could scarcely believe, if there were not this great author to say it. There are also texts about Evander's wife, who was very learned, whose name was Carmenta;⁹⁸¹ and that was because of the high eloquence she had in verse, named in Latin Carmen, where she had as great a facility as the other in prose. Moreover, Histories tell us, that in Greece there were two erudite women, called Lastheneia⁹⁸² and Axiothea,⁹⁸³ and among Plato's disciples often nominated, one had such a profound memory and the other so sharp an intellect, that many times, as Plato was there teaching, he did not want to start reading if there were not present Lastheneia and Axiothea, profound memory and sharp intellect. Strabo narrates in his book *De situ Orbis*,⁹⁸⁴ that among the Lydians was a queen called Myrtis,⁹⁸⁵ who was so short in her stature, that she seemed a dwarf: but in her soul and her knowledge was she so big, that she was named Gigantic woman; because of that a man, who is small of body but great of soul, is rightly called Giant: this queen first of all was so learned in philosophy, that Lydians put her together with seven kings, who between them were very famous. We can read about the sister of the Poet Cornificius, and also her name was Cornificia,⁹⁸⁶ who in Greek and Latin letters not only was truly learned, but in making verses and epigrams was she truly erudite, and it is said that she made more and better verses and Epigrams unawares, which her brother could not make even after thinking; and there is no doubt in this; because a faster pen is of vivid justice, which the tongue belonging to a weak intellect does not have.

⁹⁸¹ Carmenta, in the Roman religion, was a goddess of childbirth and prophecy. She was in fact Evander of Pallene's mother. Her original name is Nicostrate, but because of the allusion to the Latin meaning of "carmen" (oracle or song) and her supposed honour in giving oracles, she is mainly mentioned as Carmenta.

⁹⁸² Lastheneia of Mantinea was one of Plato's female students.

⁹⁸³ Axiothea of Phlius was one of Plato's female students.

⁹⁸⁴ Strabonis, *De Situ Orbis, Libri XVII*.

⁹⁸⁵ I could not trace the identity of Mirthis among seven Lydian kings. There is Myrtis of Anthedon who was an ancient Greek poet. She lived in the sixth century B.C.

⁹⁸⁶ Cornificia (c.85–40 B.C.) was a Roman poetess.

Boccaccio narrates in his book on praising women, that Sulla,⁹⁸⁷ a great competitor to Consul Marius, had three daughters, and one of them was Lelia Sabina,⁹⁸⁸ and she among the other sisters was the least beautiful, but among all Romans she was the wisest; because publicly she read, and not only was she gracious in reading, but also had she great elegance in the writing of Epistles and Orations. Still I leave Cornelia,⁹⁸⁹ the mother of Gracchi, who in Rome was very well known, but was more honoured for the sciences she read in Rome, than for the successes of her sons in Africa, who once was asked by a certain Roman, what was her greater honour, to see herself as a master of so many disciples, or to be mother of many children; Cornelia answered, I pride myself more for the science I learned, than for the children I bore; because children maintain honour only during life, whereas disciples affirm fame perpetually after death. It is said, that books written by this matron, Cicero not only read, but was mainly influenced by her sentences. Now don't you see the excellence of our sex in these ancient women, Greek as well as Roman, because of whom obviously all of our detractors can see that we are perfect in speculative letters, almost more than men, although they are better than we are in weapons; and in other matters of strength, but this does not overcome our perfection, because these practices illustrate more corporeal perfection, than the strength of the soul, whose strength can be seen no less in our sex than in the male one: was not the strength of the soul of that Roman Virgin called Cloelia⁹⁹⁰ marvellous in the presence of King Porsena,⁹⁹¹ who, when finding her homeland in danger, liberated it not only from the siege, but also from the fear which Romans had of that king; and Porsena, amazed by her value, kindly dismissed her and sent her to Rome, rising from the siege. Was not the strength of Porcia,⁹⁹² Cato's daughter, equally amazing, and Brutus' wife, who killed a later Caesar? Who to show to her husband the strength she would have, in case her husband's plan did not succeed, wounded herself with a knife, to show him how easily she could kill herself should his

⁹⁸⁷ Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (c.138–78 B.C.), Roman statesman.

⁹⁸⁸ This probably refers to 'Lelii filia', Laelia the daughter of Gaius Laelius Sapiens. She lived from 185–115 B.C. She is mentioned by Quintilian, and her eloquence is praised. Cicero also mentions her, in his dialogue *De Oratore*. See: Simón A. Vosters, *Antonio de Guevara y Europa*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2008, 458.

⁹⁸⁹ Cornelia Africana (c.189–110 B.C.), Roman princess, mother of Gracchi brothers, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus.

⁹⁹⁰ Cloelia, around 506 B.C., exemplum of physical and moral courage.

⁹⁹¹ Etruscan king, Lars Porsena, around 508 B.C.

⁹⁹² Porcia Catonis (c.70 B.C. [c.43]), Roman woman who was daughter of Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis, a stoic, and a politician in Old Rome. She was the wife of Brutus.

project fail. It is worthy also to remember the strength of Aretaphila of Cyrene,⁹⁹³ who liberated her homeland from the Tyrant Nicocratus,⁹⁹⁴ making him die together with Calbia,⁹⁹⁵ mother of the Tyrant; and who retired to a convent as soon as she saw her homeland free. Plutarch narrates the splendid strength of one woman whose name is Camma from Galatia,⁹⁹⁶ who to vindicate her husband's death by the hand of Sinorix,⁹⁹⁷ the man of honour from that City, who did it to be able to ask for her as his wife, as she had a beautiful body and also was adorned by many virtues, did poison herself to poison him. Long will remain in memory the women from Scythia, called the Amazons, who were so gifted in weapons, that they grew their empire magnificently, governing with those weapons the greater part of Asia. Now, don't you see, that the nature of our sex does not lack the capacity to make us not only ready, and also suitable to weapons, as it did to letters, and that the strength of the soul appears in us, no less than in men; and we are more disposed to these effects, to which men are not, if we want to believe to our reason; because it is clear, if this disposition proceeded from the essence of soul, not being the same kind as the male one, we would be ready for all these effects, not less, which are active in men; but as the diversity in this disposition to weapons, and to letters, proceeds from the diversity of constitutions: we have the temperate constitution, and when compared with ours we can say that the male's constitution is intemperate, ours has greater convenience in everything, which the intemperate does not have, as the means are closer to the two extremes, and not to one or the other; where it appears, that we have a better disposition for what men are disposed to, which are weapons; what men have not is the thing to which we are disposed, that is, letters; and if we want to cede partially to men, that they are braver, and pluckier, from this it does not follow that they are more perfect; because we are inclined to more perfect things, which are the excellent disciplines of the intellect, more so than men, as we have a more perfect and more temperate sensibility. This talent and this our excellence is proved by many elevated female souls, as you already have understood, and among the others in my

⁹⁹³ Aretaphila of Cyrene (c.50 B.C.) was a Cyrenean woman, wife of the tyrant Nicocrates: Cyrene is an ancient Greek colony in North Africa. She is described in Plutarch's *Moralia, De Mulierum Virtutibus*, [Bravery of Women], part 2 of 2, 543-553. Available at: penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/moralia/bravery_of_women*/b.html. Accessed on 7th January 2017.

⁹⁹⁴ Tyrant Nicocratus of Cyrene, in Plutarch, 543.

⁹⁹⁵ According to Plutarch, she was Nicocratus's mother.

⁹⁹⁶ Camma was a Galatian princess and priestess of Artemis. Plutarch dedicated to her, pp. 553-556.

⁹⁹⁷ Mentioned in Plutarch, 553.

times there is a very beautiful and very gentle Madonna Margerita Menze,⁹⁹⁸ who widely showed how women can easily learn, and how much their intellect is sharper, and more inclined to the disciplines, which men do not have. To the soul which will be liked by God: to give her in another world that peace, which in this one, it is possible to say, she did not have.

With this aim, therefore, and because of these reasons, I wanted to address to your Ladyship, these present days of my husband, as to one who only with her name will quiet the soul of malice and invidiousness, as all those rare virtues one woman could be adorned with, and which could describe the perfection of our sex we find in you. Your Ladyship will do me the favour of accepting these words together with my soul always ready to be at your service, and just by reading this with the beauty of your intellect you will fill any gap made by my husband, and both of us will stay committed to you for always; and once I get to know that you liked these his efforts, I will search for some other way, and some other occasion to be at your service, and to convey the world in a better way than I did until now what I do believe to be your innumerable merits, to whom I kiss hands, desirous to your gracefulness.

From Ragusa, 15th July 1582,

To your Ladyship attached, and devoted,

Maria Gondola

⁹⁹⁸ Mentioned in Di Gozze, *Dialogo della bellezza*, 1581, 15, 31, Margherita di Menze, and Madonna Marra figliuola di Sebastiano Nicolino di Menze.

Appendix 3: Images



Fig. 1. Title page of Nicolò Vito di Gozze's *Discorsi di M. Nicolò Vito di Gozze, gentil'huomo ragugeo, Dell'Academia de gli occulti, sopra le Metheore d'Aristotele, Ridotti in dialogo & divisi in quattro giornate*, Venetia, appresso Francesco Ziletti, 1584.



Fig. 2. Title page of *Discorsi di M. Nicolò Vito di Gozze, gentil'huomo ragugeo, Dell'Academia de gli occulti, sopra le Metheore d'Aristotele, Ridotti in dialogo & divisi in quattro giornate*, Venetia, appresso Francesco Ziletti, 1585.



Fig. 3. First page of the *dedicatory epistle* written by Maria Gondola, in *Discorsi*, 1584 (1585).



Fig. 4. Title page of Girolamo Camerata's *Trattato dell'honor vero, et del vero dishonore. Con tre questioni qual meriti piu honore, o' la donna, o' l'huomo. O' il soldato, o' il letterato. O' l'artista, o' il leggista di Girolamo Camerata*, Bologna, Benacci, Alessandro, 1567.

LIBRO
DI MARCO AVRELIO
CON L'HOROLOGIO,
DE PRINCIPI.

DISTINTO IN QUATRO VOLUMI.

COMPOSTO PER IL MOLTO REVERENDO
Signor Don Antonio di Guevara, Vescovo di Mondogneto,
Predicatore, & Scrittore delle Croniche della
Maestà Cesarea di CARLO Quinto.

*Nel quale sono comprese molte sententie notabili, & esempi singolari,
appertinenti non solamente a i Principi Christiani, ma a tutti
coloro che desiderano di uiuere ciuilmente, e da
ueri & honorati gentilhuomini.*

Con l'aggiunta del quarto libro nouamente tradotto di lingua Spagnuola
in Italiano, da la copia originale di esso autore,

*Et fatto maggiore con lettere, figure, e poffille, si come si conofcerà al
segno de la mano, posta in margine.*

CON PRIVILEGIO.



IN VENETIA
Appresso Francesco Portonaris.
M D LXVIII.

Fig. 5. Title page of Antonio de Guevara's *Libro di Marco Aurelio con l'Horologio, de Principi*, Venetia, 1568

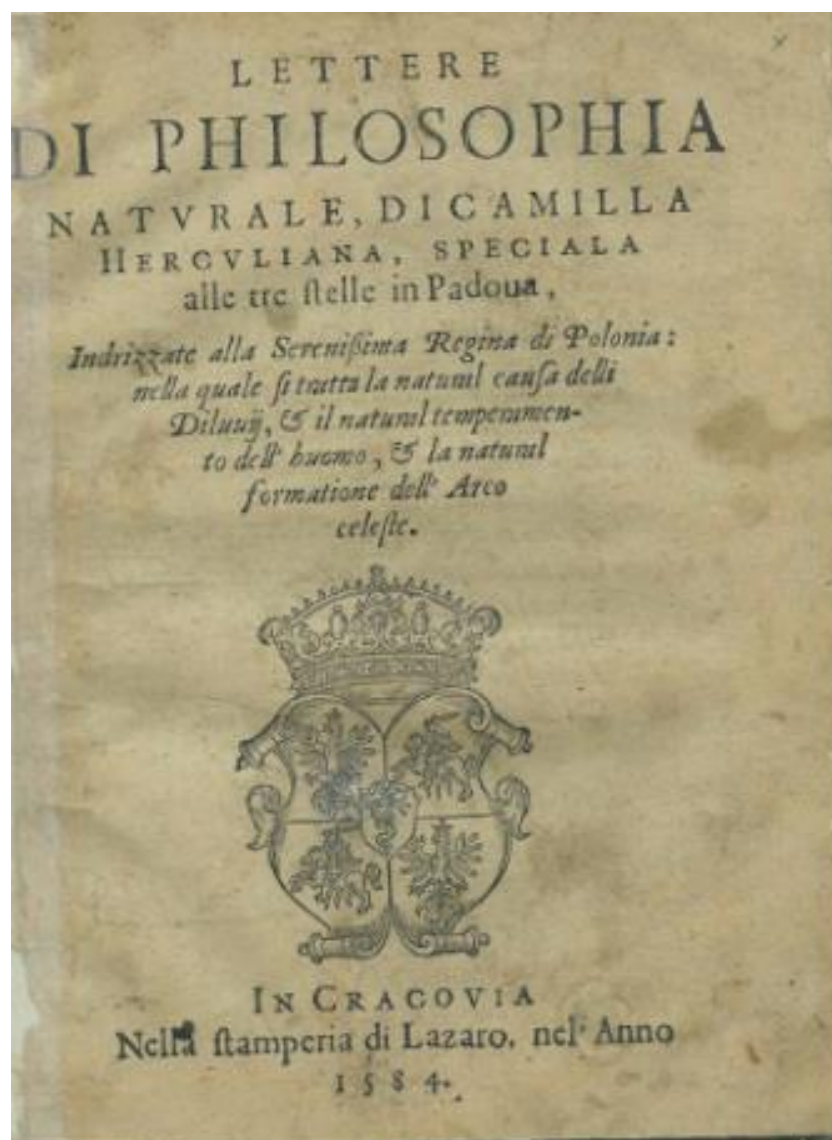


Fig. 6. Title page of Camilla Herculiana's *Lettere di philosophia naturale, di Camilla Herculiana, speciosa alle tre stelle in Padoua, indirizzate alla serenissima Regina di Polonia: nella quale si tratta la natural causa delli diluuij, et il natural temperamento dell'huomo, et la natural formatio*, Cracovia, stamperia di Lazaro, 1584.

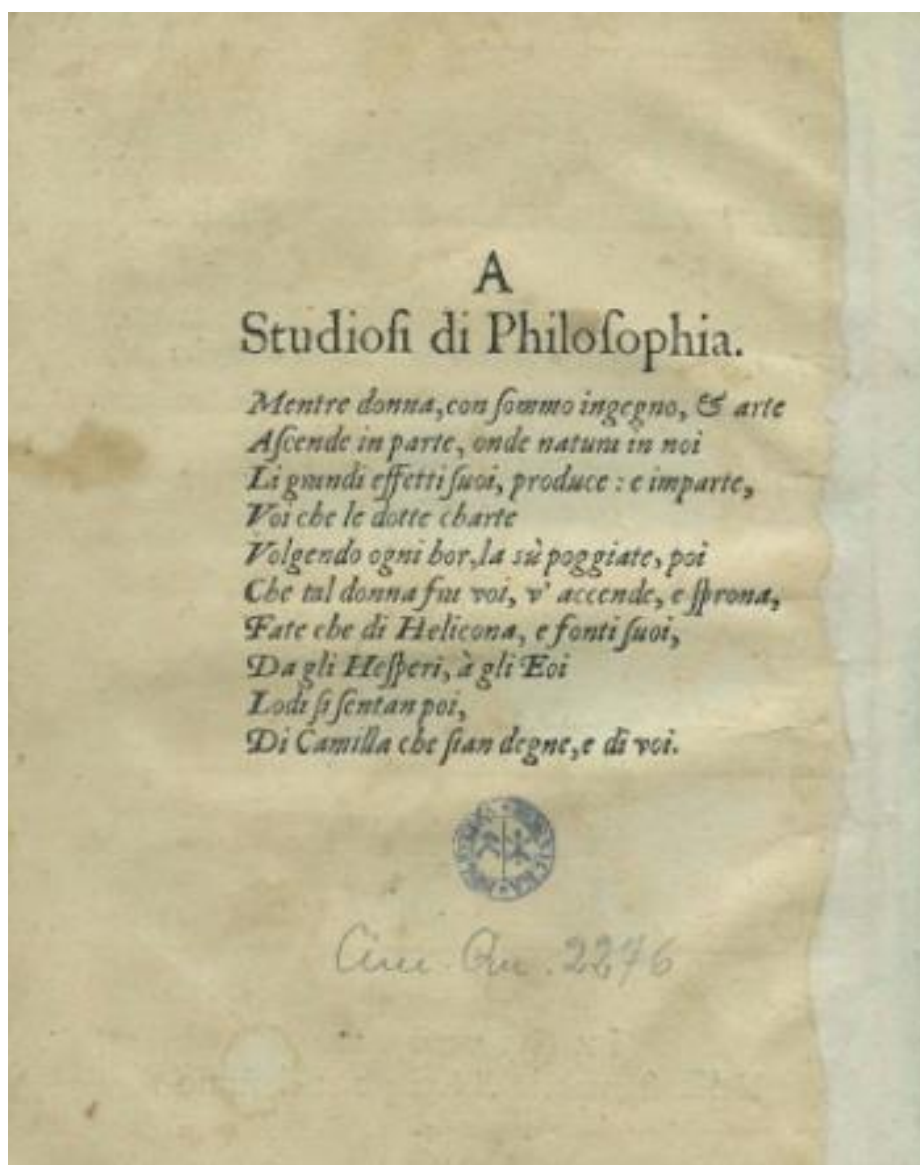


Fig. 7. Dedicatory poem by Camilla Herculiana.



Fig. 8. The cover of *Difesa de le rime et prose de la signora Speranza, et Vittoria di Bona in difesa di suo honore, et contra quelli, che ricerco farli infamia con sue rime*, c.1569.



Fig. 9. Title page of Speranza di Bona's *Difesa de le rime et prose de la signora Speranza, et Vittoria di Bona in difesa di suo honore, et contra quelli, che ricerco farli infamia con sue rime* [s.l.n.]



Fig. 10. Errata corrige in Speranza di Bona's book.

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